

PRINCIPLE IN ART  
RELIGIO POETÆ  
AND OTHER ESSAYS

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# PRINCIPLE IN ART RELIGIO POETÆ

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE



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## PREFACE

SOME of these Essays have already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Edinburgh Review*, the *St. James's Gazette*, or elsewhere.

In the original issue the author had noted that "thoughts had sometimes been repeated, almost in the same words." In the rearrangement here adopted no attempt has been made to obviate this repetition, which may be even more conspicuous than in the original order; but, "as these thoughts are mostly unfamiliar and significant, readers will be none the worse for encountering them twice or even thrice."

Shortly before his death, Mr. Patmore had suggested a rearrangement for a new issue, which has been adopted and completed for this edition. A few corrections and omissions have also been made, the greater number of which were either marked or sanctioned by the author himself. The alterations not actually his own are few and of small importance.

Some obvious mistakes in matters of fact, and

some errors of punctuation, have been corrected ; here and there a word has been transposed where the original order was imperfect ; and one or two passages which seemed to have been written for an immediate purpose rather than for more permanent effect have been omitted.



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## I

### PRINCIPLE IN ART

**I**T is not true, though it has so often been asserted, that criticism is of no use or of little use to art. This notion prevails so widely only because—among us at least—criticism has not been criticism. To criticise is to judge; to judge requires judicial qualification; and this is quite a different thing from a natural sensitiveness to beauty, however much that sensitiveness may have become heightened by converse with refined and beautiful objects of nature and works of art. “Criticism,” which has been the outcome only of such sensitiveness and such converse, may be, and often is, delightful reading, and is naturally far more popular than criticism which is truly judicial. The pseudo-criticism, of which we have had such floods during the past half-century, delights by sympathy with, and perhaps expansion of, our own sensations; true criticism appeals to the intellect, and rebukes the reader as often as it does the artist for his ignorance and his mistakes. Such criticism may not be able to produce good art; but bad art collapses at the contact of its breath, as the steam in the cylinder of an engine collapses on each admission of the spray of cold water; and thus, although good criticism cannot pro-

duce art, it removes endless hindrances to its production, and tends to provide art with its chief motive-power, a public prepared to acknowledge it. The enunciation of a single principle has sometimes, almost at a blow, revolutionised not only the technical practice of an art, but the popular taste with regard to it. Strawberry Hill Gothic vanished like a nightmare when Pugin for the first time authoritatively asserted and proved that architectural decoration could never properly be an addition to constructive features, but only a fashioning of them. The truth was manifest at once to amateur as well as to architect; and this one principle proves to have contained a power even of popular culture far greater than all the splendid "sympathetic" criticism which followed during the next fifty years. And it has done nothing but good, whereas the latter kind of writing, together with much good, has done much harm. Pugin's insight did not enable him to discover the almost equally clear and simple principle which governs the special form of decoration that properly characterises each of the great styles of architecture. Therefore, while his law of constructional decoration compelled all succeeding "critics" to keep within its bounds, they were still free to give the rein to mere fancy as to the nature of the decoration itself; and this has been becoming worse and worse in proportion as critics and architects of genius, but of no principle, have departed from the dry tradition of decorative form which prevailed in Pugin's day, and which finds its orthodox expression in Parker's *Glossary* and the elementary works of Bloxam and Rickman. Sensitiveness or natural "taste," apart from principle, is, in

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art, what love is apart from truth in morals. The stronger it is, the further it is likely to go wrong. Nothing can be more tenderly "felt" than a school of painting which is now much in favour; but, for want of knowledge and masculine principle, it has come to delight in representing ugliness and corruption in place of health and beauty. Venus or Hebe becomes, in its hands, nothing but a *Dame aux Camélias* in the last stage of moral and physical deterioration. A few infallible and, when once uttered, self-evident principles would at once put a stop to this sort of representation among artists; and the public would soon learn to be repelled by what now most attracts them, being thenceforward guided by a critical conscience, which is the condition of "good taste."

There is little that is conclusive or fruitful in any of the criticism of the present day. The very name that it has chosen, "Æsthetics," contains an implied admission of its lack of virility or principle. We do not think of Lessing's *Laocoön*, which is one of the finest pieces of critical writing in the world, as belonging to "Æsthetics"; and, like it, the critical sayings of Goethe and Coleridge seem to appertain to a science deserving a nobler name—a science in which truth stands first and feeling second, and of which the conclusions are demonstrable and irreversible. A critic of the present day, in attempting to describe the difference between the usual construction of a passage by Fletcher and that of one by Shakespeare, would beat helplessly about the bush, telling us many things about the different sorts of feelings awakened by the one and by the other, and concluding, and desiring to conclude,

nothing. Coleridge in a single sentence defines the difference, and establishes Shakespeare's immeasurable superiority with the clearness and finality of a mathematical statement; and the delight of the reader of Shakespeare is for ever heightened because it is less than before a zeal without knowledge.

There already exists, in the writing and sayings of Aristotle, Hegel, Lessing, Goethe, and others, the greater part of the materials necessary for the formation of a body of Institutes of Art which would supersede and extinguish nearly all the desultory chatter which now passes for criticism, and which would go far to form a true and abiding popular taste—one which could render some reason for its likings and dislikings. The man, however, who could put such materials together and add such as are wanting does not live; or at any rate he is not known. Hegel might have done it, had his artistic perception been as fine and strong as his intellect; which would then have expressed its conclusions without the mist of obscurity in which, for nearly all readers, they are at present shrouded. In the meantime it would be well if the professed critic would remember that criticism is not the expression, however picturesque and glowing, of the faith that is in him, but the rendering of sound and intelligible reasons for that faith.

## II

### CHEERFULNESS IN LIFE AND ART

“**R**EJOICE always : and again I say, Rejoice,” says one of the highest authorities ; and a poet who is scarcely less infallible in psychological science writes—

A cheerful heart is what the Muses love.

Dante shows Melancholy dismally punished in Purgatory ; though his own interior gaiety—of which a word by and by—is so interior, and its outward aspect often so grim, that he is vulgarly considered to have himself been a sinner in this sort. Good art is nothing but a representation of life ; and that the good are gay is a commonplace, and one which, strange to say, is as generally disbelieved as it is, when rightly understood, undeniably true. The good and brave heart is always gay in this sense : that, although it may be afflicted and oppressed by its own misfortunes and those of others, it refuses in the darkest moment to consent to despondency ; and thus a habit of mind is formed which can discern in most of its own afflictions some cause for grave rejoicing, and can then infer at least a probability of such cause in cases where it cannot be discerned. Regarding thus cheerfully and hopefully

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its own sorrows, it is not over-troubled by those of others, however tender and helpful its sympathies may be. It is impossible to weep much for that in others which we should smile at in ourselves ; and when we see a soul writhing like a worm under what seems to us a small misfortune, our pity for its misery is much mitigated by contempt for its cowardice.

A couple of generations ago most people would have opened their eyes wide at any one who should have thought remarks like these worth making. Such truth formed part of the universal tradition of civilisation and moral culture. But a wilful melancholy, and, the twin sign of corruption, a levity which acutely fears and sympathises with pains which are literally only skin-deep, have been increasing upon us of late in a most portentous way. The much-vaunted growth of "humanity" has been due to a softening rather of the brain than of the heart. Huge moral ill, the fact of national degradation, the prospect of national disaster, arouses less pain in the sympathetic hearts of humanitarians than the yelp of a poodle which has had its ear pinched. Men and times do not talk about the virtues they possess. Which is more inhuman : to punish with rack and wheel the treason which voluntarily sacrifices or jeopardises the welfare of millions, or to condone or ignore it for the sake of momentary ease? The England in which melancholy and levity are becoming prevalent habits is merry England no more. "The nation thou hast multiplied, but not increased the joy." And we are not the only nation which deserves this lamentation of the prophet. The



growths of melancholy and levity are still more marked in France. In America, some traveller has remarked, "there is comfort everywhere, but no joy." America is accordingly the only country which has no art.

It is, as I have said, a vulgar error to consider Dante a melancholy poet. In the whole range of art, joy is nowhere expressed so often and with such piercing sweetness as in the *Paradiso*; and it flashes occasionally through the dun atmosphere of the other parts of the poem. The *Inferno* is pervaded by the vigorous joy of the poet at beholding thoroughly bad people getting their deserts; and the penances of Purgatory are contemplated by him with the grave pleasure which is often felt by the saner sort of persons, even in this world, under the sufferings they acknowledge to be the appropriate punishment of and purification from the sins they have fallen into. Shakespeare is the most cheerful of poets. We read his deepest tragedies without contracting even a momentary stain of melancholy, however many tears they may have drawn from us. Calderon flies among horrors and disasters on the wings of a bird of Paradise, without any resulting incongruity; and like things may be said of the greatest painters and musicians, until quite recent times. But since about the beginning of this century how many of our geniuses have mingled their songs with tears and sighs over "insoluble problems" and "mysteries of life" which have no existence for a man who is in his right senses and who minds his own business; while the "scrannel pipes" of the smaller wits have been playing to the

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sorry Yankee tune of "There's nothing new, and there's nothing true, and it doesn't signify." Music has taken to imitate the wailing of lost spirits or the liveliness of the casino; and the highest ambition of several of our best painters seems to have been to evoke a pathos from eternal gloom.

This is false art, and represents a false life, or rather that which is not life at all; for life is not only joyful, it is joy itself. Life, unhindered by the internal obstruction of vice or the outward obscurations of pain, sorrow, and anxiety, is pure and simple joy; as we have most of us experienced during the few hours of our lives in which, the conscience being free, all bodily and external evils have been removed or are at least quiescent. And, though these glimpses of perfect sunshine are short and far between, the joy of life will not be wholly obscured to us by any external evil, provided the breast is clear of remorse, envy, discontent, or any other habitually cherished sin. The opportunities and hindrances of joyful life are pretty fairly distributed among all classes and persons. God is just, and His mercy is over all His works. If gardens and parks are denied to the inhabitant of a city lane, his eye is so sharpened by its fasts that it can drink in its full share of the sweetness of nature from a flowering geranium or a pot of crocuses on his window-sill. There are really very few persons who have not enough to eat. Marriage is open almost equally to all, except, perhaps, the less wealthy members of the upper orders. None are without opportunities of joy and abundant reasons for gratitude: and the hindrances of joy are, if justly considered,

only opportunities of acquiring new capacities for delight. In proportion as life becomes high and pure it becomes gay. The profound spiritualities of the Greek and Indian myths laugh for joy ; and there are, perhaps, no passages of Scripture more fondly dwelt upon in the Roman Breviary than those which paint the gladness of the Uncreated Wisdom : “ When he balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with him, forming all things : and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times, playing in the world : and my delight is to be with the children of men.”

### III

#### THE POINT OF REST IN ART

COLERIDGE, who had little technical knowledge of any art but that in which, when he was himself, he supremely excelled—poetry—had nevertheless a deeper insight into the fundamental principles of art than any modern writer, with the sole exception of Goethe. And this is one of his many fruitful sayings: “All harmony is founded on a relation to rest—on relative rest. Take a metallic plate and strew sand on it, sound an harmonic chord over the sand, and the grains will whirl about in circles and other geometrical figures, all, as it were, depending on some point of sand relatively at rest. Sound a discord, and every grain will whisk about without any order at all, in no figures, and with no point of rest.”

Without pretending to be able to trace this principle of rest to more than a very limited distance, and in a very few examples, I think it is worth notice in a time when art generally is characterised by a want of that repose which until recently has especially “marked the manners of the great.” Look through the National Gallery, and few pictures will be found which would not add a grace of peace to the house they were hung in, no matter how wild the subject or passionate the



motive. Step into an Academy Exhibition, and there will scarcely be discovered a dozen canvases in a thousand which, however skilful and in many respects admirable they may be, would not constitute points of *unrest*, if they were in daily and hourly sight. It is the same with nearly all modern poetry, sculpture, and architecture; and if it is not true of music, it is because music absolutely cannot exist without some reference to a point or points of rest, in keynote, fundamental strain, or reiterated refrain.

It might at first be supposed that, in a picture, this point should be that on which the eye should repose in order to bring the remainder into focal proportion; and this is true with regard to those painters who paint on the theory that the eye is fixed, and not roving in its regard. But this theory has never been that of the greatest times of art. Crome's, Constable's, and Gainsborough's landscapes do not fade off from a certain point on which the eye is supposed to be fixed; yet there will usually be found some point, generally quite insignificant in matter, on which, indeed, the eye does not necessarily fix itself, but to which it involuntarily returns for repose.

The most noteworthy remark to be made about this point of rest is, that it is in itself not the most but the least interesting point in the whole work. It is the *punctum indifferens* to which all that is interesting is more or less unconsciously referred. In an elaborate landscape it may be—as it is in one of Constable's—the sawn-off end of a branch of a tree: or a piece of its root, as it is in one of Michael Angelo's pieces in the Sistine Chapel. In the Dresden “Madonna” of

Raphael it is the heel of the Infant. No one who has not given some thought to the subject can have any idea of the value of these apparently insignificant points in the pictures in which they occur, unless he tries the experiment of doing away with them. Cover them from sight and, to a moderately sensitive and cultivated eye, the whole life of the picture will be found to have been lowered.

In proportion to the extent and variety of points of interest in a painting or a poem the necessity for this point of rest seems to increase. In a lyric or idyll, or a painting with very few details, there is little need for it. It is accordingly in the most elaborate plays of Shakespeare that we find this device in its fullest value; and it is from two or three of these that I shall draw my main illustrations of a little-noticed but very important principle of art. In *King Lear* it is by the character of Kent, in *Romeo and Juliet* by Friar Laurence, in *Hamlet* by Horatio, in *Othello* by Cassio, and in the *Merchant of Venice* by Bassanio, that the point of rest is supplied; and this point being also in each case a point of vital comparison by which we measure and feel the relationships of all the other characters, it becomes an element of far higher value than when it is simply an, as it were, accidental point of repose, like the lopped branch in Constable's landscape. Each of these five characters stands out of the stream of the main interest, and is additionally unimpressive in itself by reason of its absolute conformity to reason and moral order, from which every other character in the play departs more or less. Thus Horatio is the exact *punctum indifferens* between

the opposite excesses of the characters of Hamlet and Laertes — over-reasoning inaction and unreasoning action—between which extremes the whole interest of the play vibrates. The unobtrusive character of Kent is, as it were, the eye of the tragic storm which rages round it; and the departure, in various directions, of every character more or less from moderation, rectitude, or sanity, is the more clearly understood or felt from our more or less conscious reference to him. So with the central and comparatively unimpressive characters in many other plays—characters unimpressive on account of their facing the exciting and trying circumstances of the drama with the regard of pure reason, justice, and virtue. Each of these characters is a peaceful focus radiating the calm of moral solution throughout all the difficulties and disasters of surrounding fate: a vital centre, which, like that of a great wheel, has little motion in itself, but which at once transmits and controls the fierce revolution of the circumference.

It is obvious, as I have indicated, that a point of rest and comparison is necessary only when the objects and interests are many and more or less conflicting; but the principle is sometimes at play in forms and works in which we should scarcely have expected to find it. An armlet, or even a finger-ring, gives every portion of the nude figure an increase of animation, unity, and repose. The artistic justification of the unmeaning “burthen” of many an old ballad may probably be found, at least in part, in the same principle; as may also be that of the trick—as old as poetry—of occasionally repeating a line or

phrase without any apparent purpose in the repetition.

Of course the "point of rest" will not create harmony where—as in most modern works—its elements are absent; but, where harmony exists, it will be strangely brought out and accentuated by this in itself often trifling, and sometimes, perhaps, even accidental accessory. The only point in the human body which is wholly without beauty, significance, or purpose in itself, which is merely the scar of its severance from the mother, is the eye of its entire loveliness, the point to which everything is referred for the key of its harmony.

#### IV

### BAD MORALITY IS BAD ART

**B**AD morality is not a necessary condition of good art; on the contrary, bad morality is necessarily bad art, for art is human, but immorality inhuman. The "art" of the present generation is in great part more immoral than any that has preceded it in England. Modern English readers tolerate any amount of corruption, provided only the terms in which it is suggested be not "coarse"; and novels and poems are read, understood, and talked about by young ladies which Rochester would have blushed to be found reading, and which Swift would have called indecent. The delicate indecency of so much modern art is partly due to deficiency of virility, which, in proportion to its strength, is naturally modest. Indecency is an endeavour to irritate sensations and appetites in the absence of natural passion; and that which passes with so many for power and ardour is really impotence and coldness. On the other hand, the ban which these emasculate times have set upon plain-speaking would alone be well-nigh fatal to great art, even were there no other hindrances to it. The loss by the poet of the privilege of plain-speaking is equivalent to the loss of the string which Hermes

added to Apollo's lute. A whole octave has been withdrawn from the means of expression. Take a single example. Perhaps two or three of Iago's speeches are "coarser" than anything else in English poetry—there is nothing more so in the Bible itself; but the splendour, purity, and solidity of the most splendid, pure, and solid of all dramas that were ever written, depend in very large measure on the way in which these qualities are heightened by those very passages.

For a good many years past the worth of the philosopher and poet has been measured by the width of his departure from the fundamental truth of humanity. But the orthodox truth of humanity is a perennially young and beautiful maiden, whose clothes, however, are liable to get out of fashion, and to bring upon her the appellation of "old frump" from those who are over-anxious to keep up with the *Zeitgeist*. The worthiest occupation of the true poet and philosopher in these days is to provide her with such new clothes as shall make her timely acceptable; and happy is he who shall be found to have contributed even a ribbon or two towards the renovation of her wardrobe, which has of late years fallen so lamentably into decay.

The poet, as a rule, should avoid religion altogether as a direct subject. *Law*, the rectitude of humanity, should be his only subject, as, from time immemorial, it has been the subject of true art, though many a true artist has done the Muse's will and knew it not. As all the music of verse arises, not from infraction, but inflection of the law of the set metre; so the greatest



poets have been those the *modulus* of whose verse has been most variously and delicately inflected, in correspondence with feelings and passions which are the inflections of moral law in their theme. Masculine law is always, however obscurely, the theme of the true poet; the feeling, with the correspondent rhythm, is its feminine inflection, without which the law has no sensitive or poetic life. Art is thus constituted because it is the constitution of life, all the grace and sweetness of which arise from inflection of law, not from infraction of it, as bad men and bad poets fancy.

Law puts a strain upon feeling and feeling responds with a strain upon law, but only such a strain as that with which the hand draws the music from the strings of the lyre. Furthermore, Aristotle says that the quality of poetic language is a continual *slight novelty*. It must needs be so, if poetry would perfectly express poetic feeling, which has also a continual slight novelty, being never alike in any two persons, or on any two occasions. In the highest poetry, like that of Milton, these three modes of inflection, metrical, linguistical, and moral, all chime together in praise of the true order of human life, or moral law. Where this is not recognised there is no good art. What are inflections when there is nothing to inflect? You may get the wail of the Æolian harp, but not music.

Are those great poets wrong, then—the great dramatic poets, especially—whose works abound with representations of infraction of law and its consequent disasters? No. But there are two kinds of inflection and infraction of law: first, of the inner law, which is inflected when a man feels disposed to covet his

neighbour's wife and does not, and infracted when he does; secondly, of the outer and vaster law of God's universal justice, which cannot be infracted, but only inflected, even by sin and disaster; the law by which the man shall find it good that he has not followed his natural inclinations, and that by which the man who has so done shall be effectually convinced that the game was not worth the candle. It must be confessed that a large portion of the writings of the very best poets of the past and passing generation has been not art at all, since the one real theme of art has been absent. But it was not thus that Æschylus, Dante, Calderon, and Shakespeare understood "art."

The old commonplace that "Art is essentially religious" is so far true as that the true order of human life is the command, and in part the revelation, of God; but all direct allusion to Him may be as completely omitted as it is from the teaching of the Board School, and yet the art may remain "essentially religious." But the mere *intention* of the artist is not enough to make it so. When Homer and Milton invoked the muse they meant a reality. They asked for supernatural "*grace*," whereby they might interpret life and nature.

"By grace divine, not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine," says Wordsworth. This gift, without which none can be a poet, is essentially the same thing as that which makes the Saint. Only art is a superficies and life a solid; and the degree of grace which is enough to make a superficies divinely good and beautiful, may leave the solid unaffected. As we all know, a man may be a very good poet, and very little

indeed of a Saint. Therefore, I trust that I shall not offend the shade of Shelley, and such of his living successors as feel Shelley's abhorrence of "men who pray," if I say that, notwithstanding their heretical notions of what art should be, there are passages in the works of some of them which distinctly prove that, while writing thus, they were "under the influence of divine grace," of that supernatural spirit without which Nature is not really natural. It is to such passages, and such only, that they owe their claim to be called poets, not to those in which they have ignored or outraged law.

In the very greatest poets, the standard of human law has been absolute sanctity. The keynote of this their theme is usually sounded by them with the utmost reserve and delicacy, especially by Shakespeare, but it is there; and every poet—the natural faculties of the poet being presupposed—will be great in proportion to the strictness with which, in his moral ideal, he follows the counsels of perfection.

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+ highest kind of  
literature

V

EMOTIONAL ART

ONE of the most accomplished writers of the day, a Cambridge lecturer upon poetry, and himself no mean proficient in the art, speaks of poetry as "an art which appeals to the emotions and the emotions only." To what a pass have psychology and criticism come! Poetry, the supreme and peculiar vocation of man, an art in which no woman has attained even the second degree of excellence, to be stigmatised, and that without any intention of affront, as essentially and absolutely feminine! Poetry, in common with, but above all the arts, is the mind of *man*, the rational soul, using the female or sensitive soul, as its accidental or complementary means of expression; persuasive music assisting commanding truth to convince—not God's chosen, to whom truth is its own evidence and its own music—but the Gentiles, to whom pure truth is bitter as hyssop, until, on the lips of the poet, they find it to be sweeter than honey. "The sweetness of the lips increaseth learning." But what is the sweetness of the lips without learning? An alluring harlot, and Mr. Gosse's conception of the Muse! And, alas, not his only, but mainly that of the time, as far as it has any clear conceptions about art at all. Music,

painting, poetry, all aspire to be praised as harlots, makers of appeals "to the emotions and the emotions only." Art, indeed, works most frequently and most fruitfully *through* such appeals; but so far is such appeal from being its essence, that art, universally acknowledged to be of the very highest kind, sometimes almost entirely dispenses with "emotion," and trusts for its effect to an almost purely intellectual expression of form or order—in other words, of truth; for truth and order are one, and the music of Handel, the poetry of Æschylus, and the architecture of the Parthenon are appeals to a sublime good sense which takes scarcely any account of "the emotions."

But far be it from me to undervalue the emotions, by a due expression of which the "poet sage" becomes indeed the apostle of the Gentiles; and by giving to which, in his life and work, their due place, he becomes in soul and act what man was made to be, namely, the image of God, who is described in the Orphic hymn as "a beautiful youth and a divine nymph." In proportion as a man, above all a poet, has in his constitution the "divine nymph," the "sensitive soul," so is the "beautiful youth," the "rational mind," great in its influential force; provided that the masculine character holds itself always supreme over the feminine, which is really only sweet in so far as it is in subordination and obedience. I may go further, and say that no art can appeal "to the emotions only" with the faintest hope of even the base success it aspires to. The pathos of such art (and pathos is its great point) is wholly due to a more or less vivid expression of a vague remorse at its divorce from truth

and order. The Dame aux Camélias sighs in all Verdi's music over her lost virtue, which, however, she shows no anxiety to recover, and the characteristic expression of the most recent and popular school of poetry and painting is a ray of the same sickly and in the most part hypocritical homage to virtue. Without some such homage, even the dying and super-sensitive body of "emotional" art loses the very faintest pretensions to the name of art, and becomes the confessed carrion of Offenbach's operas and the music hall. Atheism in art, as well as in life, has only to be pressed to its last consequences in order to become ridiculous, no less than disastrous; and the "ideal," in the absence of an idea or intellectual reality, becomes the "realism" of the brothel and the shambles.

The advocate of art for "the emotions and the emotions only," cannot be brought to understand that the alternative is not "didactic" art, which is as much a contradiction in terms as his own notion of art is. Of great and beautiful things beauty and greatness are the only proofs and expressions; and the ideas of the greatest artists are the morality of a sphere too pure and high for "didactic" teaching. The teaching of art is the suggestion—far more convincing than assertion—of an ethical science, the germs of which are to the mass of mankind incommunicable; and the broad daylight of this teaching can be diffused only by those who live in and absorb the direct splendour of an unknown, and, to the generality, an unknowable sun. The mere ignoring of morality, which is what the more respectable of modern artists profess, will not lift them into the region of such teachers; much less will the

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denial of morality do so, as some modern artists seem to think. The Decalogue is not art, but it is the guide-post which points direct to where the source of art springs; and it is now, as in the day when Numa and Moses made their laws:—he is profane who presents to the gods the fruit of an unpruned vine; that is, sensitive worship before the sensitive soul has been sanctified by habitual confession of and obedience to the rational; and still worse than he who offers the Muses the “false fire” of his gross senses is he who heats the flesh-pots of Egypt with flames from the altar, and renders emotions, which were intended to make the mortal immortal, themselves the means and the subjects of corruption. Of all kinds of corruption, says St. Francis of Sales, the most malodorous is rotten lilies.

By very far the largest proportion of “the emotions,” namely, corporeal pleasures and pains, have no place at all in true art, unless, indeed, they may be occasionally and sparingly used as *discords* in the great harmony of the drama. Joy, and pathos of its privation, are the “pain” and “pleasure” of art, poetic “melancholy” and “indignation” being the sigh of joy indefinitely delayed, and wroth at the obstruction of its good by evil. These form the main region of the lyric poet. But, as joy and pathos are higher than pleasure and pain, being concerned with the possession or privation of a real good, so in *peace*—which is as much above joy as joy is above pleasure, and which can scarcely be called emotion, since it rests, as it were, in final good, the *primum mobile*, which is without motion—we find ourselves in the region of “great”

art. Pleasure is an itch of the cold and corrupt flesh, and must end with corruption; joy is the life of the natural and innocent breast, prophesying peace, but too full of desire to obtain it yet; peace is the indwelling of God and the habitual possession of all our desires, and it is too grave and quiet even for a smile.

This character of peace in art and life has sometimes affected entire states of civilisation, hovering like an angel even in atmospheres profoundly tainted with impurities, and giving an involuntary greatness to the lives and works of men to whom its source was invisible; breathing through the veils of Eleusis the beauty of the glorified body into the marbles of Phidias, and guiding the brush of Titian and Raphael, and even the chisel of Cellini, by the hand of a spirit whose dwelling was the inmost sanctuary of the Temple.

What then, it will be answered, shall be said of that poetry, some of it the most exquisite in the world, which seeks only to evoke an echo, in the reader's bosom, of human love? This: That love—if it be worthy of the name—is the highest of virtues, as well as the sweetest of emotions. Nay, that it is the sweetest of emotions because it is the highest of virtues, ordering the whole being of man “strongly and sweetly”; being in the brain confession of good; in the heart, love for, and desire to sacrifice everything for the good of, its object; in the senses, peace, purity, and ardour.

Highest kind of  
serenity.

## VI

### PEACE IN LIFE AND ART

IF we compare ancient with modern art, and the minds and manners of our far ancestors with the minds and manners of the present time, it can hardly fail to strike us that the predominant presence of peace in the former and its absence in the latter constitute the most characteristic difference. Peace, as it was held to be the last effect and reward of a faithful life, was regarded as the ideal expression of life in painting, sculpture, poetry, and architecture; and accordingly the tranquil sphere of all the greatest of great art is scarcely troubled by a tear or a smile. This peace is no negative quality. It does not consist in the mere absence of disturbance by pain or pleasure. It is the peace of which St. Thomas says "perfect joy and peace are identical," and is the atmosphere of a region in which smiles and tears are alike impertinences. In such art the expression of pain and pleasure is never an end, as it almost always is with us moderns, but a means of glorifying that peace which is capable of supporting either without perturbation. "Peace," says again the great writer above quoted, "is the tranquillity of order, and has its seat in the will." A word about this living order,

which all great art aspires to express. Each soul is created to become a beauty and felicity which is in a measure unique, and every one who has attained to a life upon his own lines desires to become more and more truly and manifestly this singular excellence and happiness for which he alone was born. This is his "ruling love," his individuality, the centre towards which his thoughts and actions gravitate, and about which his whole being revolves; while this individual being again travels about that greater centre which gives a common unity and generosity to all individualities. This double order has its exact analogue in that of the motions of the heavenly bodies, and is that by which alone the motions of souls are made heavenly. For the proof of this doctrine no one need go further than his conscience—if he has one. If he has not, since there is no peace for the like of him, the discussion of its nature need not occupy his attention.

This peace, which is the common character of all true art and of all true life, involves, in its fullest perfection, at once the complete subdual and the glorification of the senses, and the "ordering of all things strongly and sweetly from end to end."

"Forth from the glittering spirit's peace  
And gaiety ineffable  
Stream to the heart delight and ease,  
As from an overflowing well;  
And, orderly deriving thence  
Its pleasure perfect and allow'd,  
Bright with the spirit shines the sense,  
As with the sun a fleecy cloud."

It is sufficient, however, for the honour of art and life that peace should be dominant in the mind and will. Lessing observes that the dignity and repose of Greek tragedy is in no way disturbed by cries of grief and pain, too violent for modern art, because the tragedian makes it clear that these perturbations are only in the outer man, the stability of the interior being therefore illustrated rather than clouded by such demonstrations. In the Shakspearian tragedy the seat of this supreme expression is removed, for the most part, from the personality of the characters engaged, to the mind of the reader, reflecting that of the poet, who evolves peace from the conflict of interests and passions to which the predominance and victory of a single moral idea gives unity. That idea is never embodied in any single conspicuous character, though it is usually allowed an unobtrusive expression in some subordinate personality, in order to afford a clue to the "theme" of the whole harmony. Such theme-suggesting characters are, for example, the Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Kent in *King Lear*, who represent and embody the law from which all the other characters depart more or less, with proportionate disaster to themselves.

Delights and pleasures demand, no less than grief and pain, to be subordinated to peace, in order to become worthy of life and art. The cynicism and the corrupt melancholy of much of our modern life and art are the inevitable results of the desires being set upon delights and pleasures in which there is not peace.

The peace, which is "identical with perfect joy" in life and its expression in art, is also identical with purity, which is so far from being, as is commonly supposed, a negative quality, that it is the unimpeded ardour of ordered life in all its degrees, and is as necessary to the full delight of the senses as it is to the highest felicity of the spirit. Hence the greatest art, in which all things are "ordered sweetly" by essential peace, and in which pleasure is only the inevitable accident, is exceedingly bold. Its thoughts are naked and not ashamed; and Botticelli, in his celestial "Venus" in the National Gallery, expresses, without raising a disorderly fancy, things which Titian, in his leering Venus of the stews, at Florence, is too "chaste" to hint.

There are, probably, few persons who are so unhappy as not to have experienced a few moments in life during which they have drawn breath in a region in which pleasure and pain are discerned to be, in themselves, neither good nor evil, and even so much like each other that there is not much to choose between them. Those who have known such moments, and who preserve the memory of them as the standard of life, at least in desire, have alone the key to the comprehension of great art, or the possibility of approaching to it in execution. Such knowledge so respected is the initial condition of that only, true "style" which is the unique aspect of the individual soul to the absolute beauty and joy; of that living "repose, which marks the manners of the great" in art, and which bears upon the stately movement of its eternal stream the passions, pains, and



pleasures of life like eddies which show the motion that is too great to be perturbed by them.

For the time, at least, this quality, as I have said, has almost disappeared from art. It lingered in the best poetry, painting, and music of the last century and of the beginning of this. It was the ideal to which Goethe, Coleridge, Keats, and Wordsworth aspired, and in a few pieces attained. The gravity of Handel is sweet with it, and the sweetness of Mozart grave. Gainsborough, Crome, and Hogarth were more or less moved by it; and we still judge art—such of us as have any power of judgment—by the standard of this glory, though we have lost the secret of its creation.

## VII

### PATHOS

NEITHER Aristotle nor Hegel, the two great expositors of the relation of the emotions to art, has discussed the nature of that which is understood by moderns as "pathos." Aristotle has described in his *Rhetoric*, with the greatest acuteness and sensibility the conditions and modes of exciting pity. But pity includes much that is excluded by pathos; and it may be useful to endeavour to ascertain what the limitations of the latter are, and what are its conditions in relation more particularly to art, in which it plays so important a part.

Pity, then, differs from pathos in this: the latter is simply emotional, and reaches no higher than the sensitive nature; though the sensitive nature, being dependent for its power and delicacy very much upon the cultivation of will and intellect, may be indefinitely developed by these active factors of the soul. Pity is helpful and is not deadened or repelled by circumstances which disgust the simply sensitive nature; and its ardour so far consumes such obstacles to merely emotional sympathy, that the person who truly pities finds the field of pathos extended far beyond the

ordinary limits of the dainty passion which gives tears to the eyes of the selfish as well as the self-sacrificing. In an ideally perfect nature, indeed, pity and pathos, which is the feeling of pity, would be coextensive; and the latter would demand for its condition the existence of the former, with some ground of actual reality to work beneficially upon. On the other hand, entire selfishness would destroy even the faintest capacity for discerning pathos in art or circumstance. In the great mass of men and women there is sufficient virtue of pity—pity that would act if it had the opportunity—to extend in them the *feeling* of pity, that is pathos, to a far larger range of circumstances than their active virtue would be competent to encounter, even if it had the chance.

Suffering is of itself enough to stir pity; for absolute wickedness, with the torment of which all wholesome minds would be quite content, cannot be certainly predicated of any individual sufferer; but pathos, whether in a drawing-room tale of delicate distress or in a tragedy of Æschylus or Shakespeare, requires that some obvious goodness, or beauty, or innocence, or heroism should be the subject of suffering, and that the circumstance or narration of it should have certain conditions of repose, contrast, and form. The range of pathos is immense, extending from the immolation of an Isaac or an Iphigenia to the death of a kitten that purrs and licks the hand about to drown it. Next to the fact of goodness, beauty, innocence, or heroism in the sufferer, contrast is the chief factor in artistic pathos. The celestial sadness of Desdemona's death is immensely heightened by the black shadow of Iago; and the

singer of Fair Rosamund's sorrows knew the value of contrast when he sang—

Hard was the heart that gave the blow,  
Soft were those lips that bled.

Every one knows how irresistible are a pretty woman's tears.

Nought is there under heav'n's wide hollowness  
That moves more dear compassion of mind  
Than beauty brought to unworthy wretchedness.

It is partly the contrast of beauty, which is the natural appanage of happiness, that renders her tears so pathetic ; but it is still more the way in which she is given to smiling through them. The author of the *Rhetoric* shows his usual incomparable subtilty of observation when he notes that a little good coming upon or in the midst of extremity of evil is a source of the sharpest pathos ; and when the shaft of a passionate female sorrow is feathered with beauty and pointed with a smile there is no heart that can refuse her her will. In absolute and uncontrolled suffering there is no pathos. Nothing in the *Inferno* has this quality except the passage of Paolo and Francesca, still embracing, through the fiery drift. It is the embrace that makes the pathos, "tempering extremities with extreme sweet," or at least with the memory of it. Our present sorrows generally owe their grace of pathos to their "crown," which is "remembering happier things." No one weeps in sympathy with the "base self-pitying tears" of Thersites, or with those of any whose grief is without some contrasting dignity of curb. Even a little child does not move us by its

sorrow, when expressed by tears and cries, a tenth part so much as by the quivering lip of attempted self-control. A great and present evil, coupled with a distant and uncertain hope, is also a source of pathos; if indeed it be not the same with that which Aristotle describes as arising from the sequence of exceeding ill and a little good. There is pathos in a departing pleasure, however small. It is the fact of sunset, not its colours—which are the same as those at sunrise—that constitutes its sadness; and in mere darkness there may be fear and distress, but not pathos. There are few things so pathetic in literature as the story of the supper which Amelia, in Fielding's novel, had prepared for her husband, and to which he did not come, and that of Colonel Newcome becoming a Charterhouse pensioner. In each of these cases the pathos arises wholly from the contrast of noble reticence with a sorrow which has no direct expression. The same necessity for contrast renders reconciliations far more pathetic than quarrels, and the march to battle of an army to the sound of cheerful military music more able to draw tears than the spectacle of the battle itself.

The soul of pathos, like that of wit, is brevity. Very few writers are sufficiently aware of this. Humour is cumulative and diffusive, as Shakespeare, Rabelais, and Dickens well knew; but how many a good piece of pathos has been spoiled by the historian of Little Nell by an attempt to make too much of it! A drop of citric acid will give poignancy to a feast; but a draught of it——! Hence it is doubtful whether an English eye ever shed a tear over the *Vita Nuova*,

whatever an Italian may have done. Next to the patient endurance of heroism, the bewilderment of weakness is the most fruitful source of pathos. Hence the exquisitely touching points in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Two on a Tower*, *The Trumpet-Major*, and other of Hardy's novels.

Pathos is the luxury of grief; and when it ceases to be other than a keen-edged pleasure it ceases to be pathos. Hence Tennyson's question in "Love and Duty," "Shall sharpest pathos blight us?" involves a misunderstanding of the word; although his understanding of the thing is well proved by such lyrics as "Tears, idle tears," and "O well for the fisherman's boy." Pleasure and beauty—which may be said to be pleasure visible—are without their highest perfection if they are without a touch of pathos. This touch, indeed, accrues naturally to profound pleasure and to great beauty by the mere fact of the incongruity of their earthly surroundings and the sense of isolation, peril, and impermanence caused thereby. It is a doctrine of that inexhaustible and (except by Dante) almost unworked mine of poetry, Catholic theology, that the felicity of the angels and glorified saints and of God Himself would not be perfect without the edge of pathos, which it receives from the fall and reconciliation of man. Hence, on Holy Saturday the Church exclaims, "O felix culpa!" and hence "there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine righteous who need no repentance." Sin, says St. Augustine, is the necessary shadow of heaven; and pardon, says some other, is the highest light of its beatitude.



## VIII

### POETICAL INTEGRITY

THE assertion that the value of the words of a poet does and ought to depend very much upon his personal character may seem, at the first glance, a violent paradox ; but it is demonstrably true. A wise or tender phrase in the mouth of a Byron or a Moore will be despised, where a commonplace of morality or affection in that of a Wordsworth or a Burns is respected. If the author of *Don Juan* had said that for him "the meanest flower that blows could give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," as he would have said had it occurred to him to do so, no one would have believed him ; it would have passed for a mere "poetical licence," and would have been excused as such and forgotten. Byron and Wordsworth have both declared in words of similar force and beauty that the sights and sounds of nature "haunted them like a passion." But the declaration is not consistent with what we know of Byron, and it is consistent with what we know of Wordsworth ; and in the one case it creates a like frame of mind in the reader, while in the other it passes like a melodious wind, leaving no impression. Now this mighty element of character resides, not in the poet's active

life, by which he is and ought to be socially judged, but in the spiritual consistency and integrity of his mind and heart, as it is to be inferred from the cumulative testimony of his words, which are, after all, the safest witnesses of what the man truly is. A man's actions—although we are bound socially to judge him thereby—may belie him: his words never. Out of his mouth shall the interior man be judged; for the interior man is what he heartily desires to be, however miserably he may fail to bring his external life into correspondence with his desire; and the words of the man will infallibly declare what he thus inwardly is, especially when, as in the case of the poet, the powers of language are so developed as to become the very glass of the soul, reflecting its purity and integrity, or its stains and insincerities, with a fidelity of which the writer himself is but imperfectly conscious.

To a soundly trained mind there is no surer sign of shallowness and of interior corruption than that habitual predominance of form over formative energy, of splendour of language and imagery over human significance, which has so remarkably distinguished a great deal of the most widely praised poetry of the past eighty years. Much of this poetry has about as much relation to actual or imaginative reality as the transformation scene of a pantomime; and much more—called “descriptive”—has so low a degree of significance and betrays so inhuman an absorption in the merest superficialities of nature, that when the writer pretends to deal with those facts and phenomena of humanity which, directly or indirectly, are the main region of every true poet's song, he has to overcome

our sense that he is an habitual trifler before he can gain credit for sincerity, even when he is giving utterance to what may really be a passing strain of true poetic thought and feeling. A poet who is thus constantly occupied with the superficialities of nature may probably attain to an accuracy and splendour of analytical description which has its value in its way, and which may, in certain transitory conditions of popular taste, raise him to the highest pinnacle of favour. But such poetry will be judged, in the end, by its human significance; and the writer of it will have the fatal verdict of "heartless" recorded against him—a verdict which even in the time of his favour is implicitly pronounced by the indifference with which his professions of human principle and feeling are received even by his admirers.

The slightest touch of genuine humanity is of more actual and poetic value than all that is not human which the sun shines on. The interest of what is called "descriptive" or "representative" in real poetry and all real art is always human, or, in other words, "imaginative." A description by Wordsworth, Coleridge or Burns, a landscape by Crome, Gainsborough or Constable, is not merely nature, but nature reflected in and giving expression to a true state of mind. The state of mind is the true subject, the natural phenomena the terms in which it is uttered; and there has never been a greater critical fallacy than that contained in Mr. Ruskin's strictures on the "pathetic fallacy." Nature has no beauty or pathos (using the term in its widest sense) but that with which the mind invests it. Without the imaginative eye it is like a

flower in the dark, which is only beautiful as having in it a power of reflecting the colours of the light. The true light of nature is the human eye ; and if the light of the human eye is darkness, as it is in those who see nothing but surfaces, how great is that darkness!

The saying of Wordsworth concerning the Poet, that

You must love him ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love,

which at first reading sounds very much like nonsense, is absolutely true. He must have won your credit and confidence in his words, by proofs of habitual veracity and sincerity, before you can so receive the words which come from his heart that they will move your own. If, in the utterance of what he offers to you as the cry or the deep longing of passion, you catch him busily noticing trifles—for which very likely he gets praise—"accurate observation of nature"—you will put him down as one who knows nothing of the passion he is pretending to express. If you detect him in the endeavour to say "fine things" in order to win your admiration for himself, instead of rendering his whole utterance a single true thing, which shall win your sympathy with the thought or feeling by which he declares himself to be dominated, the result will be the same ; as also it will be if you discover that the beauty of his words is obtained rather by the labour of polish than by the inward labour and true finish of passion. When, on the other hand, some familiarity with the poet's work

8. has assured you that, though his speech may be unequal and sometimes inadequate, it is never false; that he has always something to say, even when he fails in saying it: then you will not only believe in and be moved by what he says well; but when the form is sometimes imperfect you will be carried over such passages, as over thin ice, by the formative power of passion or feeling which quickens the whole; although you would reject such passages with disgust were they found in the writing of a man in whose thoughts you know that the manner stands first and the matter second. ✓

## IX

### THE POETRY OF NEGATION

W B. POETRY is essentially catholic and affirmative, dealing only with the permanent facts of nature and humanity, and interested in the events and controversies of its own time only so far as they evolve manifestly abiding fruits. But the abiding fruits of such events and controversies are very rarely manifest until the turmoil in which they are produced has long since subsided; and therefore poets, in all times before our own, have either allowed the present to drift unheeded by, or have so handled its phenomena as to make them wholly subsidiary to and illustrative of matters of well-ascertained stability. The many occasional poems of pastimes, of which temporary incidents have been the subjects, in no way contradict this assertion in the main; and the casual example of a poet like Dryden affords only the confirming exception. Dryden was fond of protesting, especially when he was a Catholic; and there is no doubt but that this habit added greatly to his popularity in his lifetime, as it does to the favour in which some of the most distinguished of our modern poets are now held; but all those points which probably constituted the high lights of Dryden's poetry to his contemporaries



have suffered in course of time a change like that which has come over the whites of many of Sir Joshua Reynold's pictures; and it is much to be feared that a similar fate awaits a large proportion of what has been written by several of the best poets of the generation now passing away. Most of our recent poets, even while condemning political revolution, have shared in the ideas or feelings which are at the bottom of revolutions, a hope which the facts of nature do not justify, and a disbelief in what those facts do justify—namely, the ineradicable character of moral evil with its circumstantial consequences. The heart of the modern poet is, as a rule, always vibrating between the extremes of despondent grumbling at the present conditions and hasty and unreasonable aspirations for the improvement of his kind; his tragedies and hymns of rejoicing are alike void of the dignity and repose which arise from a sound confession of the facts of humanity and a cheerful resignation to its imperfections; and he whose true function is to stand aside as the tranquil seer too often now becomes the excited agent in matters which concern him least of all men, because of all men he is the least fitted to meddle with them. It is hard to say which is more wonderful—the clearness of the true poet's vision for things when he is content with looking at them as they are, or his blindness when he fancies he can mend them. Famous statesmen have marvellously drivelled in verse, but not more marvellously than famous poets have drivelled in what pertains to statesmanship. It is scarcely without a feeling of amazement that a man of ordinary good sense contrasts the power of poetic vision in

M. J. P.  
Facts

writers like Victor Hugo and Carlyle with the childishness of their judgments when they propose antidotes for evils which they so clearly see, but for which they do not see that there are no antidotes, but only palliatives. Looking for what they fancy may be, when their vocation is to proclaim with clearness that which is, one poet will shriek to us (for untruths cannot be sung) that all will be well when King Log is down and King Stork reigns in his stead; another that Niagara may yet be dammed if country gentlemen will hire drill-sergeants to put their gardeners and farm-labourers through the goose-step; another says the world will be saved if a few gentlemen and ladies, with nothing better to do, will take to playing at being their own domestics; a fourth, in order to save morals, proposes their abolition; a fifth proclaims that all will have good wages when there remains no one to pay them; a sixth discovers in the science of the future a sedative for human passions instead of a wider platform for their display; and so on. Others, who have no patent medicines on hand, impotently grumble or rage at evils in which, if they looked steadily, they might discern the good of justice, or that of trial, or both (as great poets in past times always have done); and, instead of truly singing, they sob hysterical sympathy with such sufferings in others as, if they were their own, they either would bear or know that they ought to bear with equanimity.

The statesman, the social reformer, the political economist, the natural philosopher, the alms-giver, the hospital visitor, the preacher, even the cynical

humorist, has each his function, and each is rightly more or less negative ; but the function of the poet is clearly distinguished from all of these, and is higher though less obtrusive than any. If is simply affirmative of things which it greatly concerns men to know, but which they have either not discovered or have allowed to lapse into the death of commonplace. He alone has the power of revealing by his insight and magic words the undreamt-of mines of felicity which exist potentially for all in social relationships and affections. The inexhaustible glories of nature are a blank for many who are yet able to behold them reflected in his perceptions. His convincing song can persuade many to believe in, if they do not attain to taste—as he, if indeed he be a poet, must have tasted—the sweet and wholesome kernel which the rough shell of unmerited suffering conceals for those who are patient. And he can so contemplate the one real evil in the world as to give body and life and intelligibility to that last and sharpest cry of faith, “O felix culpa.”

The temptations which our time offers to the poet in order to induce him to forsake his own line are very great, and poets are human. The conceited present craves to have singers of its own, who will praise it, or at least abuse it ; and it pays them well for pandering to its self-consciousness, lavishing its best honours upon them as leaders of the “Liberal movement,” and scoffing at those, as “behind their time,” who stand apart and watch and help those abiding developments of humanity which advance “with the slow process of the suns.”

X

B

## "DISTINCTION"<sup>1</sup>

I HAVE been taken to task at great length and with great severity by the *Spectator* for having identified the "elect" with the "select"; and the *Guardian* has charged me, in terms not less profuse and energetic, with entertaining "flunkey" notions, not only of this life, but of the next. The *Spectator*, furthermore, denounces me as a person of singularly "savage" and "scornful" disposition. Now, as these are moral rather than literary censures, and as any one may, if he likes, consider that he is under obligation to defend his character publicly when it has been publicly impugned, I desire to say a few words in explanation of expressions and sentiments which I think that my judges have misinterpreted.

I confess frankly to a general preference for persons of "distinction," and even to believing that they are likely to have a better time of it hereafter than the undistinguished, but I humbly and sincerely protest to

<sup>1</sup> When this Essay appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* it was taken so much *au grand sérieux* by the newspapers, especially the *Spectator*, that I resolved never thenceforward to attempt to deal in "chaff" or fun, without clearly intimating my intention at the outset.

my monitors that I do not, as they assume, identify "distinction" with wealth, culture, and modern Conservative politics, though I do hold that in the absence of culture, "distinction" rarely becomes apparent, just as, in the absence of polish, the tints and veins of a fine wood or marble, though they may be there, are little evident. In this world, at least, "de non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem est ratio."

If we could see the soul of every man—as, indeed, we can, more or less, in his face, which is never much like the face of any other—we should see that every one is in some degree "distinguished." He is born "unique," and does not make himself so; though, by fidelity to himself and by walking steadily and persistently on his own line, this distinction can be indefinitely increased, as it can be indefinitely diminished by the contrary process until he may end in extinction; for, interiorly, man lives by contrast and harmonious opposition to others, and the communion of men upon earth as of Saints in heaven abhors identity more than Nature does a vacuum. Nothing so shocks and repels the living soul as a row of exactly similar things, whether it consists of modern houses or of modern people, and nothing so delights and edifies as "distinction."

It was said of a celebrated female Saint that she did nothing but what was done by everybody else, but that she did all things as no one else did them. In manners and art, as in life, it signifies far less what is done or said than how it is done and said; for the unique personality, the only truly interesting and

excellent thing, the “distinction,” comes out in the latter only.

I am old enough, and have been lucky enough—no doubt, through favour rather than through the manifestation of any distinction of my own—to have been occasionally present at small private gatherings of eminent statesmen and literary men, in times when such eminence usually savoured of distinction; and I confess that I have had few experiences which so helped me to understand how pleasant a thing life might become under supernaturally favourable circumstances.

My friendly monitors of the *Guardian* and *Spectator* may, perhaps, discover further confirmation, in these words, of their impression that I am at once a “flunkey” and a “savage”; and my confession may recall to their minds that other savage to whom the missionary sought in vain to convey any idea of Heaven until he compared it with a perpetual feast of buffalo-beef well masticated by a squaw. Well, difference, though it may not amount to distinction, is better than dull uniformity; and I will go on my own way without nourishing ill-will towards my critics, and, I hope, without provoking it in them. There is so little distinction now, that I will not quarrel with anybody for not understanding me when I praise it. In English letters, for example, now that Matthew Arnold and William Barnes are gone, and Dr. Newman and Lord Tennyson are silent, distinction has nearly vanished.

The verse of Mr. Willam Morris, always masterly, is sometimes really distinguished, as in the prelude



and some of the lyrics of *Love is Enough*. The distinction, too, of Mr. Swinburne's writing is occasionally unquestionable; but he allows himself to be troubled about many things, and would, I fancy, write more poetically, if less forcibly, were his patriotism not so feverish, and his horror of the errors and wickedness of Popery more abstract, disinterested, and impersonal. He is wanting, I venture to think, in what Catholic moralists call “holy indifference.” Distinction is also manifest in the prose of Mr. George Meredith when the cleverness is not too overwhelming to allow us to think of anything else; but, when the nose of epigram after epigram has no sooner reached the visual nerve than the tail has whisked away from it, so that we have had no time to take in the body, our wonder and bedazement make it sometimes impossible for us to distinguish the distinction, if it be there. Mr. Pater. Mr. Symonds, and Mr. Henley are not without claim to rank with the “quality,” though their distinction is a trifle too intentional. Mrs. Meynell, alone, is, both in prose and verse, almost always thoroughly distinguished.

Democracy hates distinction, though it has a humble and pathetic regard for eminence and rank; and eminence and rank, by the way, never paid a more charming and delicate compliment to Democracy than when Lord Rosebery affirmed that the test of true literature, and its only justifiable *Imprimatur*, is “the thumb-mark of the artisan.”

The ten or so superior and inexhaustibly fertile periodical writers who (with three or four fairly good novelists) now represent English literature, and are

the arbiters and, for the most part, the monopolists of fame, share the dislike of their *clientèle* to "distinction," suppressing it, when it ventures to appear, with a "conspiracy of silence" more effective than the guillotine, while they exalt the merit which they delight to honour by voices more overwhelming than the *plébiscite*. Witness the fate of William Barnes, who, though far from being the deepest or most powerful, was by far the most uniformly "distinguished" poet of our time. Mr. G. S. Venables said, perhaps, no more than the truth when he declared, as he did in my hearing, that there had been no poet of such peculiar perfection since Horace. Mr. F. T. Palgrave has also done him generous and courageous justice. But what effect have these voices had against the solid silence of non-recognition by our actual arbiters of fame? He is never named in the authentic schedules of modern English poets. I do not suppose that any one nearer to a Countess than his friend Mrs. Norton ever asked him to dinner, and there was not so much as an enthusiastic Dean to decree (upon his own respectable responsibility) the national honour of burial in Westminster Abbey to the poor classic. On the other hand, the approving voices of our literary and democratic Council of Ten or so are as tremendously effective as their silence. No such power of rewarding humble excellence ever before existed in the world: Mrs. Lynn Lynton, of her own knowledge, writes thus: "Of a work, lately published, one man alone wrote sixteen reviews. The author was his friend, and in sixteen 'vehicles' he carried the flag of his friend's triumph." To compare good things

with bad, this beneficent ventriloquism reminds one of Milton's description of the devil, in the persons of the priests of Baal, as “a liar in four hundred mouths.”

I hope that I may further exonerate myself from the charge of a proclivity to “plush”—this, if I remember rightly, was the word used by the *Guardian*—and also from that of a “savage” disrespect for modern enlightenment, as authenticated by “the thumb-mark of the artisan,” when I go on to say that, to my mind, there can be no “distinction,” in life, art, or manners, worth speaking of, which is not the outcome of singular courage, integrity, and generosity, and, I need scarcely add, of intellectual vigour, which is usually the companion of those qualities habitually exercised. An accomplished distinction, as the sight of it gives the greatest delight to those who have it or are on the way to the attainment of it, so it is the greatest of terrors to the vulgar, whether of the gutter or in gilded chambers. Their assertion of their sordid selves it rebukes with a silence or a look of benevolent wonder, which they can never forgive, and which they always take for indications of intolerable pride, though it is nothing other than the fitting and inevitable demeanour, under the circumstances, of the “good man, in whose eyes,” King David says, “a vile person is despised”; or that recommended by St. Augustine, who tells us that, if a man does not love the living truth of things, you should “let him be as dirt” to you; or by a still higher Authority, who directs you to treat such an one as a “sinner and a publican,” or, in modern phrase, a “cad.” Naturally,

the average democrat—who has not yet learned to love the living truth of things—resents "distinction," and pathetically turns to Lord Rosebery and other such highly certificated judges of what is really excellent for consolation and reassurance ; and naturally the leaders of democracy, in the House of Commons or in the newspapers and magazines, are as jealous of distinction as the Roman democrats were of the man who presumed to roof his house with a pediment—which, perhaps, reminded them too disagreeably of a Temple.

The finest use of intercourse, whether personal or through books, with the minds of others is not so much to acquire their thoughts, feelings, and characters as to corroborate our own, by compelling these to "take aspect," and to derive fresh consciousness, form, and power to our proper and peculiar selves. Such intercourse not only brings latent "distinction" into life, but it increases it more and more ; a beautiful and beloved opposition acting as the scientific toy called the "electric doubler," by which the opposite forces in the two juxtaposed discs may be accumulated almost without limit, and splendid coruscations of contrasting life evoked, where there apparently was mere inertness before. The best use of the supremely useful intercourse of man and woman is not the begetting of children, but the increase of contrasted personal consciousness.

All attraction and life are due to magnetic opposition, and a great individuality, appearing in any company, acts as a thunder-cloud, which brightens the circumjacent air by alluring to or repelling from

itself all the dusty and inert particles which float so thickly in the air of ordinary companies. The Catholic Church, whose *forte*, I think, is psychological insight, is peculiarly sensible in this, that, instead of encouraging uniformity of thought and feeling, as all other Churches do, she does her best, in the direction of souls, to develop as wide a distinction as is consistent with formal assent to her singularly few articles of obligatory faith. She requires consent to the letter of the doctrine, but welcomes as many and seemingly conflicting ways of viewing it as there are idiosyncrasies of character in men, recommending each not to force his inclination, but to seek such good in the doctrine as best suits him. Thus does she encourage the immense diversity with which the final vision of Truth shall be reflected in prismatic glories from the “Communion of the Saints.”

In the world, as I have said, distinction can scarcely be manifested without a certain amount of culture, especially that part of culture which consists in simplicity, modesty, and veracity. But culture in the democracy is usually deficient in these characteristics, and is also wanting in that purity of manner and phraseology without which delicate distinctions of nature are, more or less, indecipherable. Plain speaking—sometimes very unpleasantly plain speaking—may be consistent with distinction; but until Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Labouchere, and Mr. Gladstone, for example, learn to leave off calling Tory spades sanguinary shovels, their eminent personalities must lack one fundamental condition of true self-manifestation. Persons who habitually express them-

selves so loosely must rest content, in this world, with something short of true distinction, though when they shall have attained to the Communion of Saints it may become unexpectedly conspicuous in them. So in art. In poetry, for instance, good and simple manners and language are not distinction, but distinction nowhere appears without them. The ordinary laws of language must be observed, or those small inflections of customary phrase, that "continual slight novelty," which is, as Aristotle, I think, says, the essential character of poetic language, and which is so because it is the true and natural expression of individuality, will be wanting. Even the genius and ardour of Dr. Furnivall must fail to disinter the soft pearl of distinction from the heaped potsherds and broken brickbats of a violent and self-imposed originality of diction, however great the natural and acquired faculties of the poet may be; yes, even though such faculties be far greater than those of others who may have added to their generally inferior abilities the art of "expressing themselves." Self must, however, be eliminated from a man's consciousness before the "how," which is the first essential in art, can make itself heard above the voice of the comparatively insignificant "what." To many persons this setting of the manner before the matter must appear almost immoral. Shall the virtues of eagerness and earnestness in pursuit of one's own true good and that of mankind be put after such a trifle as the mode of professing them? The truth, however, is that such eagerness and earnestness are not virtues but rather proofs that virtue is not yet attained, just



as the desire for praise is a proof that praise is not fully deserved. Repose "marks the manners of the great," for it is the expression of a degree of attainment which makes all further attainment that is desired easy, sure, and unexciting, and of a modesty which refuses to regard self as the "hub of the universe," without which it cannot revolve, or indeed as in any way necessary to its existence and well-being, however much it may concern a man's own well-being that he should take his share, to the best of his abilities, in doing the good which will otherwise be done without him. The worst hindrance to distinction in nearly all the poetry of our generation is the warm interest and responsibility which the poets have felt in the improvement of mankind; as if—

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"Whether a man serve God or his own whim,  
Much matters, in the end, to any one but him!"

But, to recur again from Art to Life, the virtuous Democrat is always a little Atlas who goes stumbling along with his eye-balls bursting from his head under his self-assumed burthen. Another obstacle to his distinction is his abhorrence of irrationality of all sorts. He dreams of no beauty or excellence beyond the colossal rationality of a Washington or a Franklin; whereas distinction has its root in the irrational. The more lofty, living, and spiritual the intellect and character become, the more is the need perceived for the sap of life which can be sucked only from the inscrutable and, to the wholly rational mind, repulsive ultimates of nature and instinct. The ideal nation of rational Democrats, so far from exemplifying the glory

of distinctions, would find its similitude in a great library consisting entirely of duplicates, digests, and popular epitomes of the works of John Stuart Mill.

I confess, therefore, to a joyful satisfaction in my conviction that a real Democracy, such as ours, in which the voice of every untaught ninny or petty knave is as potential as that of the wisest and most cultivated, is so contrary to nature and order that it is necessarily self-destructive. In America there are already signs of the rise of an aristocracy which promises to be more exclusive, and may, in the end, make itself more predominant than any of the aristocracies of Europe; and our own Democracy, being entirely without bridle, can scarcely fail to come to an early and probably a violent end. There are, however, uses for all things, and those who love justice enough not to care much should disaster to themselves be involved in its execution will look, not without complacency, on the formal and final ruin of superiorities which have not had sufficient care for their honour and their rights to induce them to make even a sincere parliamentary stand for their maintenance. "Superiorities," when they have reached this stage of decay, are only fit to nourish the fields of future civilisation, as ancient civilisations, gone to rot, have so richly nourished ours; and when Democracy shall have done its temporary work of reducing them to available "mixin," Democracy, too, will disappear, and—after how many "dark ages" of mere anarchy and war and petty fluctuating tyrannies, who can tell?—there will come another period of ordered life and another harvest of "distinguished" men.

In the meantime “genius” and “distinction” will become more and more identified with loudness; floods of vehement verbiage, without any sincere conviction, or indications of the character capable of arriving at one; inhuman humanitarianism; profanity, the poisoner of the roots of life; tolerance and even open profession and adoption of ideas which Rochester and Little would have been ashamed even remotely to suggest; praise of any view of morals, provided it be an unprecedented one; faith in any foolish doctrine that sufficiently disclaims authority.

That such a writer as Walt Whitman should have attained to be thought a distinguished poet by many persons generally believed to have themselves claims to distinction, surely more than justifies my forecast of what is coming. That amazing consummation is already come.

Being well satisfied that the world can get on in this, its destined course, without my help, I should not have broken my customary habit in order to trouble it and myself with the expression of my views of “distinction” and its condition, culture, had it not been for the moral obligation, under which, as I have said, any one may, if he likes, consider himself, to write an *Apologia pro moribus suis*, when these have been publicly attacked. I do not trouble the public often, and have never done so about myself. I take silent and real comfort in the fatalism which teaches me to believe that if, in spite of my best endeavours, I cannot write poetry, it is because poetry is not the thing which is wanted from me, and that, when wanted, it will come from somebody else. But to be

stigmatised as a "flunkey" and a "savage," by writers eminent for gentleness and orthodox manners, is a different thing. Flunkeyism and savagery, though, as times go, they should be considered as vices condoned by custom, yet *are* vices; and for this and no other reason have I thought it right to explain the views, feelings, and expressions upon the misconception of which these charges have been founded.

But I have also to complain that there has been a certain amount of carelessness on the part of my accusers. I do think that when the *Guardian* charges me with the sin of having said nothing in the *Angel in the House* about the "Poor," the writer should have remembered the one famous line I have ever succeeded in writing, namely, that in which Mrs. Vaughan is represented as conveying

"A gift of wine to Widow Neale."

I put it in on purpose to show that my thoughts were *not* wholly occupied with cultivated people, though I knew quite well when I did so that it must evoke from the Olympians—as a candid friend, who has access to the sacred Hill, assures me has been the case—thunders of inextinguishable laughter. Again, I am surprised and grieved that a journal, which so well represents and protects an Establishment in which primitive graces and doctrines have of late been revived in so gratifying a manner, should have accused me of carrying my flunkey notions into a future state, with no other proof alleged than my affirmation of the doctrine of the Intercession of Saints,

when I say that sinners, through them, approach Divinity—

“With a reward and grace

Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor who hails Him to his face.”

Was it just to assume that by the “unwash'd boor” I meant only the artisan who had not put aside for the Sunday the materials with which he is accustomed to affix his *Imprimatur* to sound literature?

Again, I must say that the writer in the *Spectator*—whose hand is not easily to be mistaken for any but that of the kindest and most conscientious of editors—should not have denounced me as a person of eminently savage disposition, when he must, I think, have remembered that the very last time I saw him I protested to him how completely my feelings were in unison with the mild amenity of Dr. Newman, adding, by way of confirmation, from a poem of my own—

“O, that I were so gentle and so sweet,  
So I might deal fair Sion's foolish foes  
Such blows!”

He also neglects, I think, to put a fair interpretation upon what he calls my “hatred” and “scorn” of the People. Sir Thomas Browne, in a time when the People were much less disagreeable than they are become in this the day of their predominance, declared that they constituted the only entity which he could say with truth that he sincerely hated. Now Sir Thomas Browne was, as we know from his own assurance, among the sweetest-tempered and least savage of men—as, indeed, I believe that I myself am. Neither Sir Thomas nor I ever meant the least

unkindness or affront to any individual. I have examined my conscience carefully, and I find myself in a state of universal charity. I condemn no one to perdition; I am willing to believe that, were we admitted to the secret recesses of their souls, we might discover some apprehension of the living truth of things in Mr. Gladstone, some conscience in Lord Rosebery of the limits which should be put to party complaisance, some candour in the editor of *Truth*; and I am so far from “hating” these or any, in a wicked sense, that, though I cannot love them with the “love of complacency”—as I believe the schoolmen call it, in distinction to the “love of benevolence”—I love them so much with the latter kind of love that I desire heartily the very best that could happen for them, which would be that, for a moment, they should see themselves as they truly are. I cannot help adding—though I think the *tu quoque* rather vulgar—that, when this really excellent politician and critic said that I confounded the select with the elect, he himself was more or less confounding the elect with the electors.

Finally, had I really been a “flunkey”—I cannot get the sting of that word out of me—had I departed from my Darby and Joan notions to please the dainty with descriptions of abnormal forms of affection; had I sought to conciliate the philosophic by insisting that no son can reasonably regard the chastity of his mother as other than an open question; had I endeavoured to allure laughter by such easy combinations of profanity and *patois* as have won for so many a reputation for being vastly humorous; had I, in



compliment to abstainers from what is strong, diluted my modicum of spirit with ten times its bulk of the pure element ; had I paid even proper attention to the arbiters of fame, how much “earthlier happy” might I now have been ! As it is, whether my thoughts are “pinnaced dim in the intense inane” of the *Unknown Eros*, or I proffer, in the *Angel in the House*, “a gift of wine to Widow Neale,” the Council of Ten or so are alike unsympathetic ; in my declining years I have scarcely a Countess on whom I can rely for a dinner ; when I die there will be no discerning Dean to bury me, upon his own responsibility, in Westminster Abbey ; and on my obscure tombstone some virtuous and thoughtful democrat may very likely scribble, “Here lies the last of the Savages and Flunkeys,”—notwithstanding all I have now said to prove that I am an unpretentious and sweet-tempered old gentleman, who is harmlessly and respectably preparing for a future state, in which he trusts that there will be neither tomahawk nor “plush.”

## XI

### KEATS

**M**R. SIDNEY COLVIN'S book upon Keats is, in the main, a welcome exception to what has become, of late, the rule in this class of work. It is remarkably just, and every good reader will feel it to be the more warmly appreciative because it is scarcely ever extravagantly so. The bulk of Keats's poetry, including "Endymion," is estimated at its true worth, which, as Keats—the severest judge of his own work—knew and confessed, was not much; and the little volume (justly styled by Mr. Colvin "immortal") which was published in 1820, and which does not consist of more than about 3000 lines, is declared to contain nearly the whole of the poet's effective writing. And even in this little volume—which includes "Lamia," "Isabella," "The Eve of St. Agnes," the five "Odes," and "Hyperion"—Mr. Colvin acutely detects and boldly points out many serious defects. From the comparatively worthless waste of the rest of Keats's writing, Mr. Colvin picks out with accurate discernment the few pieces and passages of real excellence; and he does criticism good service in directing attention to the especial value of the fragment called "The Eve of St. Mark," and of that which is probably

the very finest lyric in the English language, "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

As long as Mr. Colvin limits himself to the positive beauties and defects of Keats's poetry he is nearly always right; it is only in his summing up and in his estimate of the comparative worth of his subject that a less enthusiastic critic must part company with him. "I think it probable that by power, as well as by temperament and aim, he was the most Shakespearian spirit that has lived since Shakespeare." Is not the truth rather that, among real poets, Keats was the most un-Shakespearian poet that ever lived? True poets may be divided into two distinct classes, though there is a border-line at which they occasionally become confused. In the first class, which contains all the greatest poets, with Shakespeare at their head, intellect predominates; governing and thereby strengthening passion, and evolving beauty and sweetness as accidents—though inevitable accidents—of its operation. The vision of such poets may almost be described in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, in speaking of the Beatific Vision. "The vision," he writes, "is a virtue, the beatitude an accident." Such poets are truly spoken of as masculine. In the other class—in which Keats stands as high as any other, if not higher—the "beatitude," the beauty and sweetness, is the essential, the truth and power of intellect and passion the accident. These poets are, without any figure of speech, justly described as feminine (not necessarily effeminate); and they are separated from the first class by a distance as great as that which separates a truly manly man from a truly womanly

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woman. The trite saying that the spirit of the great poet has always a feminine element is perfectly true notwithstanding. "The man is not without the woman;" though "the man is not for the woman, but the woman for the man." The difference lies in that which has the lead and mastery. In Keats the man had not the mastery. For him a thing of beauty was not only a joy for ever, but was the supreme and only good he knew or cared to know; and the consequence is that his best poems are things of exquisite and most sensitively felt beauty, and nothing else. But it is a fact of primary significance, both in morals and in art (a fact which is sadly lost sight of just now), that the highest beauty and joy are not attainable when they occupy the first place as motives, but only when they are more or less the accidents of the exercise of the manly virtue of the vision of truth. There are at fitting seasons a serene splendour and a sunny sweetness about that which is truly masculine, whether in character or in art, which women and womanly artists never attain—an inner radiance of original loveliness and joy which comes, and can only come, of the purity of motive which regards external beauty and delight as accidental.

N.B. | In his individual criticisms of Keats's poems Mr. Colvin fully recognises their defect of masculine character. In speaking of "Isabella" he says: "Its personages appeal to us, not so much humanly and in themselves, as by the circumstances, scenery, and atmosphere amidst which we see them move. Herein lies the strength, and also the weakness, of modern romance: its strength, inasmuch as the charm of the

mediæval colour and mystery is unfailing for those who feel it at all; its weakness, inasmuch as under the influence of that charm both writer and reader are too apt to forget the need for human and moral truth; and without these no great literature can exist." Again: "In Keats's conceptions of his youthful heroes there is at all times a touch, not the wholesomest, of effeminacy and physical softness, and the influence of passion he is apt to make fever and unman them quite; as, indeed, a helpless and enslaved submission of all the faculties to love proved, when it came to the trial, to be the weakness of his own nature." And again: "In matters of poetic feeling and fancy Keats and Hunt had not a little in common. Both alike were given to 'luxuriating' somewhat effusively and fondly over the 'deliciousness' of whatever they liked in art, books, and nature." In these and other equally just and unquestionable criticisms of Keats's character and works, surely Mr. Colvin sufficiently refutes his own assertion that this writer was "by temperament" "the most Shakespearian" of poets since Shakespeare. And whether he was also such (as Mr. Colvin further asserts him to have been) "by power," let the poet's work declare. In his own lovely line—which he faithfully kept to in "Lamia," "Isabella," "The Eve of St. Agnes," and the "Odes"—he is unsurpassed and perhaps unequalled. When he is true to that line we do not feel the want of anything better, though we may know that there is something better: as, in the presence of a beautiful woman, we do not sigh because she is not a General Gordon or a Sir Thomas More. But let Keats try to assume the man—as he does in

his latest work, his attempts at dramatic composition or at satirical humour, in the "Cap and Bells"—and all his life and power seem to shrivel and die, like the beauty of Lamia in the presence of Apollonius. Some of his readers may object the semblance of Miltonic strength in certain passages of the fragment "Hyperion"; but Keats himself knew and admitted that it was only a semblance and an echo, and therefore wisely abandoned the attempt, having satisfied himself with having shown the world that there was no object of merely external nature, from "roses amorous of the moon," to

The solid roar  
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,  
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where,

which he had not nerves to feel and words so to utter that others should feel as he did.

In making this distinction between poetry of a masculine and that of a feminine order, it must be understood that no sort of disrespect is intended to the latter in saying a good word for that "once important sex" of poetry which the bewitching allurements of Keats and Shelley and their followers have caused, for a season, to be comparatively despised. The femininity of such poets as these is a glorious and immortal gift, such as no mortal lady has ever attained or ever will attain. It has been proved to us how well a mortal lady may become able to read the classics; but, humbled as some of us may feel by her having headed the Tripes, it is still some compensation for those of our sex to remember that we alone can write "classics," even of the feminine order. Nor let it be



thought that we have been insisting upon a modern and fanciful distinction in thus dividing great men into two classes, in one of which the masculine and in the other the feminine predominates. It is a fact the observation whereof is as old as the mythology which attributed the parentage of heroes in whom the intellectual powers prevailed to the union of gods with women, while those who distinguished themselves by more external and showy faculties were said to have been born of the commerce of goddesses with men.

## XII

### WHAT SHELLEY WAS<sup>1</sup>

PROFESSOR DOWDEN has had access to a very large quantity of hitherto unpublished correspondence and other matter, some of which throws much new light upon Shelley's singular character; and, but for one most important point—his sudden separation from Harriet Westbrook, for which no substantial reason is given—the Professor's eleven hundred closely printed pages contain all and more than all that any reasonable person can want to know about the subject. Professor Dowden's arrangement of this mass of material is so lucid that interest seldom flags; and the whole work reads like a first-class sensational novel, of which the only faults are that the characters are unnatural and the incidents improbable. A beautiful youth of almost superhuman genius, sensitiveness, and self-abnegation, is the hero. He is given early to blaspheming whatever society has hitherto respected, and to cursing the King and his father—an old gentleman whose chief foible seems to have been attachment to the Church of England. His charity is so angelical that he remains on the

<sup>1</sup> This was published before the appearance of Mr. Matthew Arnold's Essay on Professor Dowden's book.

best of terms with one man who has tried to seduce his wife, and with another—a beautiful young lord with a club-foot, whom he finds wallowing in a society given to vices which cannot be named, and who is also a supreme poet—notwithstanding the fact that this lord has had a child by one of the ladies of his (the hero's) wife's family and treats her with the most unmerited contempt and cruelty. He adores three really respectable and attractive young ladies—by name Harriet Westbrook, Elizabeth Hitchener, and Emilia Viviani—with a passion which eternity cannot exhaust, and praises them in music like that of the spheres (witness "Epipsychidion"); and, anon, Harriet is "a frantic idiot," Elizabeth a "brown demon," and Emilia a "centaur." "It was," says his biographer, "one of the infirmities of Shelley's character that, from thinking the best of a friend or acquaintance, he could of a sudden and with insufficient cause, pass over to the other side and think the worst." It is, perhaps, fortunate that Providence should afflict supreme sanctities and geniuses with such "infirmities"; otherwise we might take them for something more than mere saints and poets. The hero, as became absolute charity, gave every one credit—at least, when it suited his mood and convenience—for being as charitable as himself: witness his soliciting Harriet Westbrook for money after he had run away with his fresh "wife," her rival. He was addicted even from his babyhood to the oddest and most "charming" eccentricities. "When Bysshe," then quite a child, "one day set a fagot-stack on fire, the excuse was a charming one: he did so that he might have 'a little

hell of his own.” At Eton “in a paroxysm of rage he seized the nearest weapon, a fork, and stuck it into the hand of his tormentor.” On another occasion, when his tutor found him apparently setting fire to himself and the house, and asked him “What on earth are you doing, Shelley?” he replied, “Please, sir, I’m raising the devil.” The pet virtue of the hero was tolerance. “Here I swear,” he writes to Mr. Hogg, “and as I break my oaths, may Infinity, Eternity blast me—here I swear that never will I forgive intolerance! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge . . . not one that leaves the wretch at rest, but lasting, long revenge.” His resolutions to be himself tolerant often broke down, and he could not abide “men who pray” and such-like; but what could be expected from such a hero in such a world! He had all the naïveté as well as the self-reliance of true greatness. He had no sooner become an undergraduate at Oxford than he printed a pamphlet on “The Necessity of Atheism,” and sent copies to the Vice-Chancellor, the heads of houses, and all the bishops, with “a pretty letter in his own handwriting” to each. He was summoned before the University authorities, who “pleaded, implored, and threatened; on the other side, the unabashed and beardless boy maintaining his right to think and to declare his thoughts to others.” Much evil as he believed of such vermin, he does not seem to have dreamed of the intolerance of which they were capable. Hogg—the dear and lifelong friend who tried to seduce his wife—writes: “He rushed in; he was terribly agitated. ‘I am expelled,’ he said, as soon

as he had recovered himself a little ; ‘ I am expelled ! ’ . . . He sat on the sofa, repeating with convulsive vehemence the words ‘ Expelled ! expelled ! ’ ” Professor Dowden thinks “ it was natural and perhaps expedient that measures should have been taken to vindicate the authority of the heads of the institution ; . . . but good feeling ” would not have punished so severely what “ was more an offence of the intellect than of the heart and will ” : for what was it “ to fling out a boy’s defiance against the first article of the Creed,” compared with the drinking and disorderly life of some other undergraduates who were yet allowed to remain in the University ? The conduct of the authorities was the less excusable that we have Mr. Hogg’s authority for the fact that at this time “ the purity and sanctity of his life were most conspicuous,” and that “ in no individual, perhaps, was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley.” Of course, in face of such an authority as Mr. Hogg, the assertion of Thornton Hunt that “ he was aware of facts which gave him to understand that Shelley while at college, in tampering with venal passions, had seriously injured his health ; and that this was followed by a reaction ‘ marked by horror,’ ” is not to be listened to, and is therefore relegated to a footnote. Professor Dowden rightly thinks that Shelley might have been all the better had he left the University at the usual time, and with his mind weighted with more discipline and knowledge. “ His voyage,” says his biographer, “ must needs have been fleet and far, and the craft, with fore and flying sails set, must often have run upon her side and drunk the water ; all the

more reason, therefore, for laying in some ballast below before she raced into the gale." Every one knows how the craft raced into the gale, with Miss Westbrook on board, as soon as the Oxford hawser was cut. Shelley might have done much worse. She was a good and attractive person. He began by liking her. "There are some hopes," he says, "of this dear little girl; she would be a divine little scion of infidelity if I could get hold of her." She seems to have been sincerely devoted to him and he afterwards to her, until circumstances unknown or undivulged made his home insupportable to her, and she became the "frantic idiot" who, though she would give Shelley money when she had it, was apparently not sufficiently "tolerant" upon other points—such as that of his proposition that she should enjoy the scenery of Switzerland in his company and that of her supplanter; and it certainly showed some narrowness of mind to cast herself, upon his final desertion of her, into the Serpentine, when she might have shared, or at least witnessed, the "eternal rapture" and "divine aspirations" which her husband was enjoying in the arms of another woman. Poor little "idiot" as she was, she constitutes almost the only point in all this bewildering "romance of reality" upon which the mind can rest with any peace or pleasure.

What Shelley was at first he remained to the last: a beautiful, effeminate, arrogant boy—constitutionally indifferent to money, generous by impulse, self-indulgent by habit, ignorant to the end of all that it most behoves a responsible being to know, and so conceited that his ignorance was incurable; showing at every



turn the most infallible sign of a feeble intellect, a belief in human perfectibility ; and rushing at once to the conclusion, when he or others met with suffering, that some one, not the sufferer, was doing grievous wrong. If to do what is right in one's own eyes is the whole of virtue, and to suffer for so doing is to be a martyr, then Shelley was the saint and martyr which a large number of—chiefly young—persons consider him to have been as a man ; and if to have the faculty of saying everything in the most brilliant language and imagery, without having anything particular to say beyond sublime commonplaces and ethereal fallacies about love and liberty, is to be a “supreme” poet, then Shelley undoubtedly was such. But, as a man, Shelley was almost wholly devoid of the instincts of the “political animal,” which Aristotle defines a man to be. If he could not see the reasons for any social institution or custom, he could not *feel* any and forthwith set himself to convince the world that they were the invention of priests and tyrants. He was equally deficient in what is commonly understood by natural affection. The ties of relationship were no ties to him : for he could only *see* them as accidents. “I, like the God of the Jews,” writes Shelley, “set up myself as no respecter of persons ; and relationship is regarded by me as bearing that relation to reason which a band of straw does to fire.” As these deficiencies were the cause of all the abnormal phenomena of his life, so they are at the root of, or rather are, the imperfections of his poetry, which is all splendour and sentiment and sensitiveness, and little or no true wisdom or true love. The very texture of his verse suffers from these causes.

In his best poems it is firm, fluent, various, and melodious; but the more serious and subtle music of life which he had not in his heart he could not put into his rhythms; which no one who knows what rhythm is will venture to compare with the best of Tennyson's or Wordsworth's, far less with the best of our really "supreme" poets. A very great deal of his poetry is much like the soap-bubbles he was so fond of blowing—its superficies beauty, its substance wind; or like many a young lady who looks and moves and modulates her speech like a goddess, and chatters like an ape.

After Shelley, the chief male figure in this romance—which would be altogether incredible were it not real—is that of the guide, philosopher, and friend of the poet's youth, Godwin. Pecksniff is genteel comedy compared with the grim farce of this repulsive lover of wisdom as embodied in himself. Like the German poet who was entrusted by one friend to be the bearer of a sausage to another, and, bit by bit, ate it all on his way, Godwin "sincerely abhorred all that was sordid and mean; but he liked sausage"; and the way he combined the necessity for nibbling at Shelley's future fortune by making incessant claims, which the latter could satisfy only by repeated and ruinous post-obits, with the other necessity for keeping up the insulted and injured dignity of a man whom Shelley had wronged past pardon, is funny beyond description. His writing to tell Shelley that he had insulted him by giving him a heavy sum of money in the form of a cheque made payable to his (Godwin's) own name, thereby making the gift liable to be construed as such

by the banker, and threatening solemnly not to receive the gift at all, unless the name was changed to "Hume" or any other the poet might select, is a touch which Shakespeare might have coveted for *Ancient Pistol*.

It appears that there still exists a good deal of writing by and concerning Shelley which it has not been deemed expedient to publish. A footnote, for instance, assures us that "a poetical epistle to Graham referring to his father in odious terms" is still "in existence"; and various other unprinted letters and poems are alluded to. But it is scarcely to be supposed that any future *Life of Shelley* will supersede Professor Dowden's—unless, indeed, it should be an abridgment, more suitable in bulk and perhaps in tone than the present publication is, for the use of those who, undazzled, or possibly repelled, by the glamour of Shelley's personality and revolutionary convictions, admire the meteoric splendour of his genius and allow it its not unimportant place in the permanent literature of England.

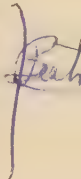
### XIII

#### BLAKE

BLAKE'S poetry, with the exception of four or five lovely lyrics and here and there in the other pieces a startling gleam of unquestionable genius, is mere drivel. A sensible person can easily distinguish between that which he cannot understand and that in which there is nothing to be understood. Mr. W. Rossetti, who is an enthusiast for "the much-maligned Paris Commune" and for Blake's poetry, says of some of the latter, where it is nearly at its worst, "We feel its potent and arcane influence, but cannot dismember this into articulated meanings." This sentence, if put into less exalted English, expresses tolerably well the aspect of mind with which we regard much of the writing of the Prophets and of the great ancient and modern mystics. Some light of their meaning forces itself through the, in most cases, purposely obscure cloud of their words and imagery; but when, by chance, a glimpse of the disc itself is caught, it is surprisingly strong, bright, and intelligible. Such writers are spoken of with irreverence by those only that would have given their verdict in favour of the famous Irishman who, being confronted with one witness swearing to having seen him take a handkerchief from

another gentleman's pocket, brought four who testified with equal solemnity to not having seen him do any such thing. The obvious rule in regard to such writers is, "When you cannot understand a man's ignorance, think yourself ignorant of his understanding." Again, if a man's sayings are wholly unintelligible to us, he may claim the benefit of a small possibility of a doubt that his meanings may be too great and necessarily "arcane" for our powers of reception. But when a writer's works consist of a few passages of great beauty and such simplicity that a child may understand them—like Blake's "Chimney-Sweep," "Tiger," "Piping down the valleys wild," "Why was Cupid a boy?" and "Auguries of Innocence"—and a great deal more that is mere ill-expressed but perfectly intelligible platitude and commonplace mixed with petty spite, and a far larger quantity still which to the ear of the natural understanding is mere gibberish, he has no right to claim, as Blake does, that the latter shall be regarded as plenarily inspired, or, indeed, as being anything better than the delirious rubbish it obviously is.

Mr. W. Rossetti, though he goes a great way further in his admiration of Blake than reason can be shown for, does the cause of reason a good service in declaring his opinion that the poet was probably mad. "When," says he, "I find a man pouring forth conceptions and images for which he professes himself not responsible and which are in themselves in the highest degree remote, nebulous, and intangible, and putting some of these, moreover, into words wherein congruent sequence and significance of expression or



analogy are not to be traced, then I cannot resist a strong presumption that that man was in some true sense of the word mad." As Pope "could not take his tea without a stratagem," so Blake could not "mix his colours with diluted glue" without declaring that "the process was revealed to him by St. Joseph"; and it was the ghost of his brother who taught him the new, though, had we not been told otherwise, the not supernaturally wonderful device of saving the expense of ordinary typography by etching the words of his verses on the copper plate which bore their illustrations. Blake was morally as well as intellectually mad; proposing on one occasion, for example, that his wife should allow him to introduce a second partner to his bed, and doing so with a *bonâ fide* unconsciousness of anything amiss in such a suggestion as perfect as that with which Shelley urged his wife to come and share the delights of a tour in Switzerland with him and his mistress Mary Godwin.

That "great wits to madness nearly are allied," is not true; but it is not only true but psychologically explicable that small "geniuses" often are so. Most children are geniuses before the dawn of moral and intellectual responsibilities; and there are some who remain, not children, but moral and intellectual manikins, all their lives. It must be confessed that conscience makes, not only cowards, but more or less dullards, of us all. The child, that

Mighty prophet, seer blest,  
On whom those truths do rest  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,



owes his power of vision to his not being able to see the flaming sword of conscience which turns every way, and hinders all men but a very few from getting a glimpse through the closed gates of Paradise. Yet it is better to be a purblind man with a conscience than a seeing manikin with none. It is better still, and best of all, when the man of developed intellect and fully accepted responsibilities retains a cherished memory of and an innocent sympathy with the knowledge that came to him in childhood and early youth, and uses his trained powers of expression in order to make the world partakers of those thoughts and feelings which had no tongue when they first arose in him, and leave no memory in the mass of men until the man of true and sane genius touches chords of recollection that would otherwise have slept in them for ever. One of the few really good things ever said by Hazlitt is that "men of genius spend their lives in teaching the world what they themselves learned before they were twenty."

For the time, however, the manikin type of genius is all the fashion, especially with a class of critics who have it in their power to give notoriety if they cannot give fame. Craziness alone passes at present for a strong presumption of genius, and where genius is really found in company therewith it is at once pronounced "supreme." This is partly because most people can see that craziness has something abnormal about it, and are ready, therefore, to identify it with genius, of which most persons know only that it also is "abnormal"; and partly because the manikin mind is always red republican, and ardent in its hatred of

kings, priests, "conventions," the "monopoly" of property and of women, and all other hindrances put in the way of virtue, liberty, and happiness by the wicked "civilizee."

Blake, as an artist, is a more important figure than Blake the poet; and naturally so, for the smallest good poem involves a consecutiveness and complexity of thought which are required in paintings only of a character which Blake rarely attempted. Yet, even as a painter his reputation has until lately been much exaggerated. That exhibition of his collected drawings and paintings was a great blow to the fame which had grown up from a haphazard acquaintance by his admirers with a few sketches or an illustrated poem. Here and there there was a gleam of such pure and simple genius as is often revealed in the speech of a finely-natured child amid its ordinary chatter; here and there the expression of a tender or distempered dream which was not like anything else in the spectator's experience; now and then an outline that had a look of Michael Angelo, with sometimes hints which might have formed the themes of great works, and which justified the saying of Fuseli that "Blake is damned good to steal from"; but the effect of the whole collection was dejecting and unimpressive, and did little towards confirming its creator's opinion that Titian, Reynolds, and Gainsborough were bad artists, and Blake, Barry, and Fuseli good ones.

## XIV

### ROSSETTI AS A POET

THE claims of Rossetti as a painter and a poet have obtained a full and generous recognition; and he has acquired a standing in either art which will in all probability abide, though it is far too soon to attempt any estimate of his position in the permanent ranks of artists and writers. His thoughtfulness, and the clearness and intensity of his perceptions, do not require to be insisted upon, nor the almost unexampled way in which he has merged—and often, it must be admitted, confounded—the functions of painter and poet. This he has done to the detriment of his perfection in either art, in neither of which can he be truly said to have attained the character of mastery which may be found, more or less, in almost all other workers of equal genius with himself, and sometimes in those whose natural qualifications have been inferior to his. Little of his drawing and none of his painting can be enjoyed without the drawback of some sense of manifest technical failure; and nearly all his poetry—which is more or less difficult by reason of the quick succession of out-of-the-way thoughts and images, needing the closest attention for their appreciation—is rendered unnecessarily so by

language which rarely has the fluency of perfection. In the two or three instances in which his verse becomes fluent and more or less masterly—notably in the “Burden of Nineveh” and “Jenny”—it ceases to be characteristic or subtle. The “Burden of Nineveh” might have been written by Southey, or any other writer of forcible words and thoughts in somewhat commonplace rhythm. This fact, that fluency fails him as soon as he gets upon his own proper ground, renders it extremely difficult to discern and to describe exactly what that ground is. Style, which is the true expression of the poet’s individuality—the mark by which we discover, not what, but how, he thinks and feels—is almost suffocated, in Rossetti’s most characteristic work, by voluntary oddities of manner and by a manifest difficulty in so moving in the bonds of verse as to convert them into graces. If subtle thoughts and vivid imagery were all that went to make a poet, Rossetti would stand very high. But these qualities must have the running commentary and musical accompaniment of free feeling, which only a correspondingly subtle and vivid versification can express, before they can be allowed to constitute a claim to the highest poetical rank. Rossetti as a versifier was not less technically defective than Rossetti as a painter; his best poems and his best paintings are the outcome, not only of very high aims—which are as common as blackberries—but of very high aims deeply and characteristically felt; and his superiority to many far more technically perfect artists results from the fact that his characteristic feeling is strong enough to make itself powerfully, however indistinctly, perceived

through the mist and obstructions of his mannerism and defective verse.

Like all men of strong artistic individuality combined with serious artistic faults, Rossetti has had a great influence upon the literature of his day—such an influence as comparatively faultless writers never exert, at least in their time. Many young versifiers and painters fancy they are reproducing Rossetti's intensity when they are only imitating the most prevailing fault of his art, its tensity. His brother, William Rossetti, in his modest and judicious introduction to these volumes, tells how he and Gabriel used to amuse themselves in making *bouts-rimés*. William says of his brother's literary toys of this sort: "Some have a *faux air* of intensity of meaning, as well as of expression; but their real core of significance is small." It cannot be denied that a careful scrutiny of much of Rossetti's published work is open to this criticism. It is tense without being intense. This fault is his great attraction to his imitators, whose every sensation is represented as a pang, delicious or otherwise, and whose mental sky is a canopy of iron destiny compared with which the melancholy of Byron, which likewise had so many copyists, was no more than a pleasant shade.

In endeavouring to do justice to Rossetti it must be remembered that, though born and bred in England, he was an Italian by blood and sympathy. His acquaintance with Englishmen and English books was by no means wide. Love, the constant theme of his art, is in some of his most important poems, not the English love whose stream is steady affection

and only its occasional eddies passion, and which, when disappointed, does not cease to be love though it becomes sorrow: but the Italian ardour, in perennial crisis, which stabs its rival and hates its object, if she refuses its satisfaction, as ardently as it worships her so long as there is hope. The limitations, also, which characterise Rossetti's poetry belong to Italian poetry itself. There is little breadth in it, but much acuteness. It is therefore quite unfair to try an essentially Italian poet, like Rossetti, by comparing his works with the classical poetry of a nation which, for combined breadth and height, far surpasses the poetry of all other languages present and past, with the doubtful exception of the Greek. The English language itself is not made for Italian thought and passion. It has about four times as many vowel sounds as Italian and a corresponding consonantal power; that is to say, it differs from the Italian about as much as an organ differs from a flute. Rossetti uses little besides the flute-notes of our English organ; and, if he had made himself complete master of those notes, it would have been the most that could have been expected of him. In appearance and manners Rossetti was thoroughly Italian. In his youth especially he had the sweet and easy courtesy peculiar to his nation. His brother says, "There was a certain British bluntness streaking the finely poised Italian suppleness and facility." This describes, better than perhaps Mr. William Rossetti intended, a characteristic which occasionally, but fortunately not often, appears in his poetry, which is most pleasing when it is least "streaked" with British bluntness: as it is, for example, in "Jenny."



Rossetti's power is chiefly shown in his long ballads, such as "Sister Helen," "The Bride's Prelude," "Rose Mary," and "The King's Tragedy." Had these been found in Percy's "Relics," they would have constituted the chief ornaments of that collection. As it is, it is impossible not to feel that they are more or less anachronisms, both in spirit and in form. The repetition of a refrain through the fifty stanzas or so of "Sister Helen," the most forcible of all these lyrical narratives, has no sufficient justification for its interruption of the fiercely flowing history. A refrain which extends to more than three or four stanzas requires and originally assumed a musical accompaniment. The constant high-pressure of passion in these ballads is also an anachronism: and to the cultured modern reader this character is calculated to defeat the poet's purpose, giving him an impression of cold instead of warmth, as if the fire had a salamander instead of a heart in its centre. A kindred fault, which Rossetti has in common with some of the most famous poets of the century, is that of conferring upon all his images an acute and independent clearness which is never found in the natural and truly poetical expression of feeling. It is true, and great poets (especially Shakespeare) have noted it, that in extreme crises of passion there will sometimes be a moment of calm in which the minutiae of some most trifling object or circumstance will, as it were, photograph themselves upon the mind. But this præternatural calm is only the "eye of the storm"; and to scatter broadcast, over a long poem, imagery with the sharpest outlines is to prove, not only that it has not been written from true

passion, but that the poet has not even observed the phenomena of true passion. Such independent force and clearness of imagery can be justified only in poems of the very lowest type of artistic construction, such as Schiller's "Song of the Bell" and "Childe Harold," which scarcely profess to have more unity than is to be found in a scrap-book. A fine poem may or may not be full of "fine things"; but, if it does abound in them, their independent value should appear only when they are separated from their context. In Rossetti, as in several other modern poets of great reputation, we are constantly being pulled up, in the professedly fiery course of a tale of passion, to observe the moss on a rock or the note of a chaffinch. High finish has nothing to do with this quality of extreme definiteness in detail; indeed, it is more often exercised by the perfect poet in blurring outlines than in giving them acuteness. It must be admitted, however, that Rossetti had an unusual temptation to this kind of excess in his extraordinary faculty for seeing objects in such a fierce light of imagination as very few poets have been able to throw upon external things. He can be forgiven for spoiling a tender lyric by a stanza such as this, which seems scratched with an adamantine pen upon a slab of agate—

But the sea stands spread  
As one wall with the flat skies,  
Where the lean black craft, like flies,  
Seem wellnigh stagnated,  
Soon to drop off dead.

Though the foregoing strictures apply to a large portion of Rossetti's work, there is a really precious

residuum which they do not touch. There are several pieces—such as “Love’s Nocturn,” “The Portrait,” “A Little While,” and many sonnets—which are full of natural feeling expressed with simple and subtle art; and in much of his work there is a rich and obscure glow of insight into depths too profound and too sacred for clear speech, even if they could be spoken: a sort of insight not at all uncommon in the great art of past times, but exceedingly rare in the art of our own.

## XV

### ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

CLOUGH worshipped Truth with more than the passion of a lover, and his writings are, for the most part, the tragic records of a life-long devotion to a mistress who steadily refused his embraces; but as it is greatly better to have loved without attaining than to have attained without loving, so Clough's ardent and unrewarded stumblings in the dark towards his adored though unseen divinity are greatly more attractive and edifying to those who have shared, successfully or not, the same passion, than is that complacent fruition of her smiles which she often accords to those who are contented to be no more than her speaking acquaintances. Regarded from a purely intellectual point of view, Clough's utterances on religion, duty, etc., are little better than the commonplaces which in these days pass through the mind and more or less affect the feelings of almost every intelligent and educated youth before he is twenty years of age; but there are commonplaces which cease to be such, and become indefinitely interesting, in proportion as they are animated by moral ardour and passion. Speech may work good by warming as well as by enlightening; and if Clough's

writings teach no new truth, they may inflame the love of truth, which is perhaps as great a service. Though he professes that he can nowhere see light where light is most necessary and longed for, his mind is utterly opposed to the negative type; and he accurately exemplifies the class of believer whom Richard Hooker endeavours to comfort, in his great sermon on "the perpetuity of faith in the elect," by the reminder that a longing to believe is implicit faith, and that we cannot sorrow for the lack of that which we interiorly hold to be non-existent. A question that must suggest itself to most readers is, What is the use and justification of these endless and tautological lamentations over the fact—as Clough conceived it to be—that, for such as him at least, "Christ is not risen"? The reply is, that the responsibility of the publication of so much that is profoundly passionate, but far from profoundly intellectual, scepticism was not his. With the exception of some not very significant critical essays, his prose consists of letters, which were of course not meant for the public; and the greater part of his poetry remained to the day of Clough's death in his desk, and would probably never have left it, with his consent, unless to be put in the fire.

Those who recognise in the "Bothie" Clough's almost solitary claim to literary eminence must somewhat wonder at the considerable figure he stands for in the estimation of the present generation. The fact is that Clough, like James Spedding, was personally far more impressive than his works; and the singularly strong effect produced among his friends by the extreme simplicity and shy kindness of his life and

manners, and the at once repellent and alluring severity of his truthfulness, gave his character a consequence beyond that of his writings with all who knew him though ever so slightly; and the halo of this sanctity hangs, through the report of his friends, about all that he has done, and renders cold criticism of it almost impossible. No one who knew Clough can so separate his personality from his writings as to be able to criticise them fairly as literature; no one who has not known him can understand their value as the outcome of character.

The impressionable and feminine element, which is manifest in all genius, but which in truly effective genius is always subordinate to power of intellect, had in Clough's mind the preponderance. The masculine power of intellect consists scarcely so much in the ability to see truth, as in the tenacity of spirit which cleaves to and assimilates the truth when it is found, and which steadfastly refuses to be blown about by every wind of doctrine and feeling. The reiterated theme of Clough's poetry is that the only way of forgetting certain problems now, and of securing their solution hereafter, is to do faithfully our nearest duty. This is no new teaching: it is that of every religion and all philosophy. But Clough had no power of trusting patiently to the promise, "Do my commandments and you shall know of the doctrine." This was the ruin of what might otherwise have been a fine poetic faculty. A "Problem" will not sing even in the process of solution, much less while it is only a hopeless and irritating "Pons."

Clough was curiously attracted by Emerson, of

whom he spoke as the only great contemporary American. Now Emerson, at his very best, never approached greatness. He was at highest only a brilliant metaphysical epigrammatist. But a religion without a dogma, and with only one commandment, "Thou shalt neither think nor do anything that is customary," had great attractions for Clough, to whom it never seems to have occurred that the vast mass of mankind, for whose moral and religious welfare he felt so keenly, has not and never can have a religion of speechless aspirations and incommunicable feelings, and that to teach men to despise custom is to cut the immense majority of them adrift from all moral restraint. The promise that we shall all be priests and kings seems scarcely to be for this world. At all events we are as far from its fulfilment now as we were two thousand years ago: and we shall not be brought nearer to it by any such outpourings of sarcastic discontent as go to the making of poems like the tedious Mephistophelian drama called "Dipsychus," which Clough had the good sense not to publish, though it is included with many others of equally doubtful value in posthumous editions of his works. This class of his poems possesses, indeed, a lively interest for a great many people of our own time, who are in the painful state of moral and religious ferment which these verses represent; but it is a mere accident of the time that there is any considerable audience for such utterances, and it is probable that in a generation or two most men will feel surprise that there could ever have been a public who found poetry in this sort of matter.



The "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich" is the only considerable poem of Clough's in which he seems, for a time, to have got out of his slough of introspection and doubt and to have breathed the healthy air of nature and common humanity. In spite of many artistic shortcomings, this poem is so healthy, human, and original, that it can scarcely fail to survive when a good deal of far more fashionable verse shall have disappeared from men's memories. The one infallible note of a true poet—the power of expressing himself in rhythmical movements of subtilty and sweetness which baffle analysis—is also distinctly manifest in passages of the "Bothie," passages the music of which was, we fancy, lingering in the ear of Tennyson when he wrote certain parts of "Maud." The originality of this idyll is beyond question. It is not in the least like any other poem, and an occasionally ostentatious touch of the manner of "Herman and Dorothea" seems to render this originality all the more conspicuous in the main. Another note of poetical power, scarcely less questionable than is that of sweetness and subtilty of rhythm, is the warm and pure breath of womanhood which is exhaled from the love-passages of this poem. Clough seems to have felt, in the presence of a simple and amiable woman, a mystery of life which acted for a time as the rebuke and speechless solution of all doubts and intellectual distresses. These passages in the "Bothie," and, in a less degree, some others in the "Amours de Voyage," stand, in the disturbed course of Clough's ordinary verse, like the deep, pure, and sky-reflecting pools which occasionally appear in the course of a restless mountain river.

## XVI

### EMERSON

THE life and writings of Emerson owe their chief claim on our attention to the fact that they represent with singular force a line of thought and belief—if belief it can be called—which an immense number of the young, intelligent, and sincere of the past and present generation have been endeavouring to follow, though as yet without any remarkable or even satisfactory results. “Every man is potentially a man of genius,” is the one dogma of Emerson’s religion—though it is nowhere put thus plainly by him; and its one commandment is “Be a man of genius.” Absolute nonconformity with everything, we are taught, is the first condition of personal and social well-being; and we are enjoined to look upon our individual insight as our one infallible guide, though it may bid us go one way to-day and the opposite to-morrow. At the time when Emerson was debating with himself as to whether he should throw up his office as Unitarian preacher, he seems to have had some searchings of heart as to the validity of the new doctrine. “How,” he writes, in his journal, “shall the droning world get on if all its *beaux esprits* recalcitrate upon its approved forms and accepted

constitutions and quit them in order to be single-minded? The double-refiners would produce at the other end the double-damned." This is perhaps the wisest thing ever said by Emerson; but he nevertheless chose his part definitely with the "double-refiners." "I hate preaching," he writes in a subsequent page of his Journal. "Preaching is a pledge, and I wish to say what I feel and think to-day, with the proviso that to-morrow perhaps I shall contradict it all." In the free use of his proviso he accordingly, for the remainder of his life, followed and taught others to follow what he called "intuition," even though it should not wait for "to-morrow" to contradict itself. For example, in the last page but one of the essay on "Character" we are instructed to reject the doctrine of the divinity of Christ because "the mind requires a victory to the senses, a force of character which will convert judge, jury, soldier, and king;" and on the following page we are told that, "when that love which is all-suffering, all-abstaining, all-aspiring . . . comes into our streets and houses, only the pure and aspiring can know its face."

Emerson's life, journals, and letters considerably modify the impression which his published essays and lectures are calculated to leave—namely, that he was a mere stringer-together of lively thoughts, images, and poetical epigrams. He seems to have made the best of his own humanity, and to have always done the right according to his judgment, though the doing of it sometimes involved serious pecuniary inconvenience, and, as in the case of his opposition to the fugitive slave law, violent popular disapprobation.

He was kindly and moral in his family and social relationships, and was conscientious even to a fault in avoiding those venial sins of language to which the most of us are perhaps too indifferent. His American admirers sometimes spoke of him as an "angel." At any rate, he was a sort of sylph. He noted of his compatriots generally that "they have no passions, only appetites." He seems to have had neither passion nor appetite; and there was an utter absence of "nonsense" about him which made it almost impossible to be intimate with him. Margaret Fuller, his closest friend, and even his wife, whom he loved in his own serene way, seem to have chafed under the impossibility of getting within the adamant sphere of self-consciousness which surrounded him. Not only could he not forget himself, but he could not forget his grammar; and when he talked he seemed rather to be "composing" his thoughts than thinking them. His friend and admirer, Mr. Henry James the elder, complains that for this reason his conversation was without charm. "For nothing ever came but epigrams, sometimes clever, sometimes not." His manners and discourse were, however, invariably kind and amiable. He never seems to have uttered a personal sarcasm, and only once in his life to have been seriously angry. This was on occasion of the famous fugitive slave law, which he indignantly declared would be disobeyed, if need be, by himself and every honest man.

Dr. W. H. Furness writes of Emerson: "We were babies and schoolfellows together. I don't think he ever engaged in boys' plays. . . . I can as little re-

member when he was not literary in his pursuits as when I first made his acquaintance." Indeed, "orating" was in Emerson's blood. Nearly all his known ancestors and relatives seem to have been "ministers" of some denomination or other. His school-days—though he never became a scholar in any department of learning—began before he was three years old. His father complains of the baby of two years and odd months—"Ralph does not read very well yet"; and during all the rest of his youth Dr. Furness says that he grew up under "the pressure of I know not how many literary atmospheres." Add to this the fact that his father and mother and his aunt—who was the chief guide of his nonage—were persons who seemed to think that love could be manifested only by severe duty, and rarely showed him any signs of the weaknesses of "affection," and we have a bad a bringing-up for a moral, philosophical, and religious teacher as could well have been devised. "The natural first, and afterwards the spiritual." Where innocent joy and personal affection have not been main factors of early experience the whole life wants the key to Christianity; and in such a case a rejection of all faith—except that in "genius," "over-soul," "a somewhat which makes for righteousness," or some other such impotent abstraction—is, in our day, almost inevitable in a mind of constitutional sincerity like Emerson's, especially when such sincerity is unaccompanied, as it was in him, by a warm and passionate nature and its intellectual correlative, a vigorous conscience. Emerson, though a good man—that is, one who lived up to his lights—had little or no

conscience. He admired good, but did not love it ; he denounced evil, but did not hate it, and did not even maintain that it was hateful, but only held that it was greatly inexpedient.

Though Emerson could not see that a religion of which there is nothing left but an "over-soul" is much the same thing as a man of whom there is nothing left but his hat, the religious bodies to which he was for many years more or less attached were less devoid of humour, and the joke of a faith without a dogma became, in time, too much for their seriousness. Consequently they agreed amicably to part, and Emerson pursued his course ; that which had hitherto been called "preaching" becoming thenceforward lecturing and "orating."

There can be no greater misfortune for a sincere and truthful mind like Emerson's than to have to get a living by "orating." This was his position, however ; and there can be no doubt that his mind and his writings were the worse for this necessity. His philosophy afforded him only a very narrow range of subject. In all his essays and lectures he is but ringing the changes upon three or four ideas—which are really commonplace, though his sprightly wit and imagination give them freshness ; and it is impossible to read any single essay, much more several in succession, without feeling that the licence of tautology is used to its extremest limits. In a few essays—for example, "The Poet," "Character," and "Love"—the writer's heart is so much in the matter that these endless variations of one idea have the effect of music which delights us to the end with the reiteration of an



exceedingly simple theme ; but in many other pieces it is impossible not to detect that weariness of the task of having to coin dollars out of transcendental sentiments to which Emerson's letters and journals often bear witness. But, whether he were delighted with or weary of his labour, there is no progress in his thought, which resembles the spinning of a cockchafer on a pin rather than the flight of a bird on its way from one continent to another.

Emerson's was a sweet and uniformly sunny spirit ; but the sunshine was that of the long Polar day, which enlightens but does not fructify. It never even melted the icy barrier which separated his soul from others ; and men and woman were nothing to him, because he never got near enough to understand them. Hence his journals and letters about his visits to Europe, and especially to England, are curiously superficial in observation. He made many acute and witty remarks, such as, " Every Englishman is a House of Commons, and expects that you will not end your speech without proposing a measure ;" but, on the whole, he quite misunderstood the better class of our countrymen, of whom, in his second visit to England, he had the opportunity of seeing a good deal. Although there was much constitutional reserve, there was no real reticence in him. His ethereal, unimpassioned ideas had, indeed, nothing in them that, for him, commanded reticence ; and he concluded that the best sort of Englishmen were without any motives that " transcend " sense, because he did not feel, as all such Englishmen do, that though that which transcends sense may be infinitely dearer than all else, and even



because it is so dear, it is better not to talk of things which can scarcely be spoken of without inadequacy and even an approach to nonsense. Many an Englishman would turn aside with a jest from any attempt to lead him into "transcendental" talk, not because he was less, but because he was more, "serious" than his interlocutor ; and also because the very recognition of certain kinds of knowledge involves the recognition of obligations, to confess directly or indirectly the fulfilment or neglect whereof implies either self-praise or self-blame, which, in ordinary circumstances, are alike indecent. In fact, Emerson was totally deficient in the religious sense, which is very strong in the hearts of a vast number of Englishmen who own to no fixed creed, but who would be revolted by the profound and unconscious irreverence with which Emerson was in the habit of speaking and writing of the most sacred things and names. The name of "Jesus" frequently occurs in such sentences as this: "Nor Jesus, nor Pericles, nor Cæsar, nor Angelo, nor Washington," etc.

If we put aside Emerson's unconscious malpractices in this sort, the attitude of his mind with regard to the serious beliefs of the world were too childish for resentment or exposure. It is as if one should be angry with the young lady who should simper, "Oh, my religion is the religion of the Sermon on the Mount !" in answer to an attempt to talk with her about Bossuet or Hooker.

## XVII

### CRABBE AND SHELLEY

THE firmament of fame is full of variable stars, and they are nowhere thicker than in that great constellation of poets which marks the end of the last and the commencement of this century.\* Among the names of Byron, Moore, Rogers, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Burns, Campbell, Crabbe, Cowper, and Scott, there are only two whose lustre has remained perfectly steady and seems likely to remain so. Two or three, blazing forth at once as luminaries of the first magnitude, have gradually and persistently waned—whether or not ever to recover any part of their lost splendour is very doubtful. The light of one or two others has fluctuated violently, and continues to do so, with a manifest diminution, however, in their total sum of light; one or two others have suffered a distinct degradation from first into second or third class lustres, and at present show no sign of further alteration. Two at least have grown astonishingly in conspicuousness, and now glow like the Dog-star and Aldebaran—though there are not

\* The author is speaking of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

wanting sky-critics who declare that they discern conditions of coming change and retrogression ; and one at least has almost disappeared from the heaven of public recognition, not, however, without prognostications from some of an assured reassertion of a moderate if not predominating position.

To quit figures of speech, Coleridge and Burns—though poets of very different calibre—are the only two of the thirteen above mentioned whose reputations have been altogether unaffected by the violent changes of literary fashion which have taken place in the course of the century. Each of these two poets has written a good deal which the world will willingly let die ; but Coleridge in his great way, and Burns in his comparatively small way, have done a certain moderate amount of work so thoroughly and manifestly well that no sane critic has ever called it into question or ever will. By the leaders of poetic fashion Moore and Rogers have come to be accounted as almost nowhere as poets. Southey and Cowper now depend mainly for their fame upon a few small pieces, which in their own day were not regarded as of much account in comparison with such works as *The Task* and *The Curse of Kehama* ; Campbell now lives only, but vigorously, in a few lyrics. Who but Mr. Ruskin is there that would not laugh now to hear the name of Scott coupled with those of Keats and Shelley ? Byron, who once out-blazed all others, is now considered, by many judges not altogether to be disregarded, less as a great fixed star than as a meteor formed from earthly fumes condensed and for a time incandescent in the upper air. Wordsworth's fame, though all agree that it is assured,

has suffered and is likely still to suffer some fluctuations; and, when poetry is talked about in circles of modern experts, no one ever hears of Crabbe, though here and there one comes upon some literary oddity who maintains that he has as good a claim as Shelley to a place in the heavens of abiding fame. As this, to most modern ears astounding, paradox is certainly maintained, in private at least, by several persons whose opinion the most advanced critic would not think of despising, it may be worth while to see what can be said for it.

Things, it is said, are best known by comparison with their opposites; and, if so, surely Crabbe must be best illustrated by Shelley and Shelley by Crabbe. Shelley was an atheist and profoundly immoral; but his irreligion was radiant with pious imagination, and his immorality delicately and strictly conscientious. Crabbe was a most sincere Christian in faith and life; but his religion and morality were intolerant, narrow, and scrupulous, and sadly wanting in all the modern graces. Shelley had no natural feeling or affection and the greatest sensitiveness; Crabbe had the tenderest and strongest affections, but his nerves and æsthetic constitution were of the coarsest. Shelley's taste often stood him in the stead of morality. He would have starved rather than write begging letters to Thurlow, Burke, and other magnates, as Crabbe did when he wanted to better his condition as an apothecary's apprentice. Crabbe's integrity produced some of the best effects of taste, and made him at once an equal in manners with the dukes and statesmen with whom he associated as soon as he had been

taken from his beggary by Burke. Through years and years of poverty and almost hopeless trial Crabbe was a devoted and faithful lover, and afterwards as devoted and faithful a husband to his "Myra," whom he adored in verses that justified some one's description of his style as "Pope in worsted stockings." Shelley breathes eternal vows in music of the spheres, to woman after woman, whom he will abandon and speak or write of with hatred and contempt as soon as their persons have ceased to please him. Crabbe knew nothing of the "ideal," but loved all actualities, especially unpleasant ones, upon which he would turn the electric light of his peculiar powers of perception till the sludge and dead dogs of a tidal river shone. Jeffrey described the true position of Crabbe among poets better than any one else has done when he wrote, "He has represented his villagers and humble burghers as altogether as dissipated and more dishonest and discontented than the profligates of higher life. . . . He may be considered as the satirist of low life—an occupation sufficiently arduous, and in a great degree new and original in our language." In this his proper vocation Crabbe is so far from being a "Pope in worsted stockings," that his lines often resemble the strokes of Dryden's sledge-hammer rather than the stings of his successor's cane. But, when uninspired by the intensely disagreeable or vicious, Crabbe's "diction" is to modern ears, for the most part, intolerable. In his cooler moments he poured forth thousands of such couplets as

It seems to us that our Reformers knew  
Th' important work they undertook to do.

And to such vile newspaper prose he not only added the ghastly adornment of verse, but also frequently enlivened it with the "poetic licences" and Parnassian "lingo" of the Pope period. What a contrast with Shelley! He erred quite as much as Crabbe did from the imaginative reality which is the true ideal; but it was all in the opposite way. If Crabbe's eye, in its love for the actual and concrete, dwelt too habitually upon the hardness and ugliness of the earth on which he trod, Shelley's thoughts and perceptions were for the most part

Pinnacled dim in the intense inane

of a fancy which had no foundation in earth or heaven. His poetry has, however, the immortal reality of music; and his songs *are* songs, though they may be often called "songs without words," the words meaning so little though they sound so sweet.

This "parallel"—as lines starting and continued in opposite directions have got to be called—might be carried much further with advantage to the student of poetry; and the comparison might be still more profitable if the best poems of Coleridge were examined as illustrations of the true poetic reality from which Crabbe and Shelley diverge equally, but in contrary ways. Crabbe mistakes actuality for reality; Shelley's imagination is unreal. Coleridge, when he is himself, whether he is in the region of actuality, as in "Genevieve," or in that of imagination, as in "Christabel," is always both real and ideal in the only true poetic sense, in which reality and ideality are truly one. In each of these poems, as in every

work of true art, there is a living idea which expresses itself in every part, while the complete work remains its briefest possible expression, so that it is as absurd to ask What is its idea? as it would be to ask what is the idea of a man or of an oak. This idea cannot be a simple negation; and simple evil—which is so often Crabbe's theme—is simple negation. On the other hand, good, in order to be the ground of the ideal in art, must be intelligible—that is to say, imaginatively credible, though it may want the conditions of present actuality. But is there any such ideal as this in Shelley?



## XVIII

### A MODERN CLASSIC, WILLIAM BARNES

A CLASSICAL work may be roughly defined as a work of a past generation about which every man of liberal education may be expected to know something. To satisfy this description it is not at all necessary that the work should be of intrinsically classical merit. A speech, a sermon, or a pamphlet, has sometimes attained a classical position by the mere accident of its having been the origin or turning-point of a political or religious movement. Some writers of very ordinary quality refuse to be forgotten because the current of contemporary fashion set so strongly in their favour as to become a fact of literary history. Others have become classics by force of quantity rather than of quality; and the right of these to their position is sometimes better than that of either of the above-named sorts, because quantity is a real element of merit, when the quality is good though it may not be excellent, as a large mass of aquamarine may be of more real value than a very small emerald. Several writers, the main portion of whose writings is of poor account, have become immortal by one work among many, or by a fragment of some work; some by a single song. Those writers who have left

nothing but work of classical quality may almost be counted upon the fingers, a good part of the writings of some of the very greatest authors claiming not to be forgotten only for their authors' sake. Without affirming, with Lord Bacon, that the stream of time bears up light and worthless things, and submerges the weightiest—a sentence in which it is difficult to discover the writer's proverbial wisdom—there can be little doubt that it has submerged some things of truly classical pretensions, even since the invention of printing provided an immensely increased security against the literal extinction of a book before there has been time to decide upon its merits. In times past, however, though readers were far fewer in number, they seem to have been so much higher in average quality than the readers of our own day, that scarcely any works of real power escaped a sufficient amount of contemporary recognition to insure them some hearing during that space of time which is ordinarily required for testing a work's fitness for fame. Time has not utterly submerged nearly so much writing of the first quality by its mere lapse as has been dragged to the bottom by too vast a weight of circumjacent worthlessness. Fifty good lines will sometimes float five thousand bad or medium ones, yet they may be sunk by twenty or fifty thousand such. Suckling's will survive a hundred more recent fames upon the strength of his poem, *On a Wedding*; but Drayton, whose minor poems contain passages not less exquisite, is fading in the dark shadow cast by his "greater" works. Another fact worth noting is that time, while it steadily sustains the fame of

certain writers, detaches it from their best productions. The comparatively unknown "minor poems" of Spenser, for example are, quantity for quantity, of higher significance than the *Faery Queen*, as Milton well discerned, for he has borrowed little or nothing from the latter, but has abundantly appropriated the beauties of the former, to which he is even indebted for what many readers believe to be some of his own most exquisite and characteristic rhythms, especially those of *Lycidas*.

Again, a fame sufficiently enduring to be justly called such, is sometimes subject to severe fluctuations. Pope and Byron are examples. These writers have had their claims to be ranked as great poets supported and attacked with party violence, one side refusing to recognise them as really poets at all, the other, partly provoked by such injustice, claiming for them the highest peak of Parnassus. This conflict, which is still raging, and will probably do so for a long time, might be greatly pacified by reasonable compromise, founded on the truth above asserted—that the real value of a large aquamarine may be more than that of a small emerald. Except in one famous passage in the *Dunciad*, Pope, much of whose writing is faultless in manner, never rose to perfect greatness of style, to such style as entitles a man to fame, and secures it for him, though he may have written no more than fifty lines at such a pitch. Byron never sustained himself even for twenty verses in such a region. Yet it seems absurd to say that, on the whole, Herrick or George Herbert, for example, have a better title to a classical position than Byron or Pope,

though the best writing of the two former is as much more exquisite in quality than that of the two latter, except in the single passage above named, as the beauty of a violet or a peach-blossom is than that of a peony or a dahlia. The light of the smallest fixed star is more intense than that of the most lustrous planet; but in the sky of fame Jupiter and Venus will always make a more conspicuous figure than any two of the Pleiades.

Without venturing upon such confident flights of criticism as those of Mr. Frederic Harrison, who dismisses most of Shakespeare's writing as rubbish, it may be safely said that the inequality of many writers of the highest classical position and genius is one of the most extraordinary of the phenomena of mind. The greatest writers, when the spirit forsakes them, often write not only as badly as but worse than commonly sensible people. Milton's *Speech on the Liberty of unlicensed Printing* contrasts strangely with the truculent, vituperative, and unreasoning mass of his other prose writings. In some half a dozen short poems, Coleridge's fountain of inspiration rises, pure and dazzling, to a height no other poet of the century attained, while the rest of his verse is a marsh of comparative dulness. Cowley's cold conglomerate of grit is only rarely fused by the poet's fire, but it was no common fire that could, even occasionally, fuse and be fed by such material; and, as long as there are any readers who do not seek the Muses only for *a-musement*, the question, too hastily asked a hundred years ago, "Who now reads Cowley?" will not be answered as the querist expected it to be.

At this time of day, and with the example of the French "Classics" before us, it need not be urged that sustained finish is not the first claim to classical rank; yet sustained finish, in passages at least, is one of the invariable notes of such claim; for absolute and unlaboured finish is the natural accompaniment of those full floods of poetic passion which come upon all true poets, at least in moments. In such happy flood-tides the best words will take their best order in the best metres without any sensible effort; but in most poets these outpourings are rare indeed, though a conscientious worker will sometimes conceal their rarity by spending so much time and labour upon the comparatively uninspired context of passages inspired that his whole work will be upon the same level of verbal beauty, and the delighted peruser will find nothing to remind him that easy reading's sometimes d——d hard writing. There have been few poets who have worked with such conscientiousness, and the reward of such work is far off, for "the crowd, incapable of perfectness," are more moved to admiration by the alternation and contrast of good with bad than by that of different kinds of excellence. This disqualification for immediate recognition is equally shared by another and still rarer order of poet—he who is the ideal "classic," he in whose every verse poetic feeling breathes in words of unlaboured perfection.

I should hesitate to declare my belief that William Barnes, the "Dorset Poet," belongs to this rare order did I not know that my belief is shared by judges of authority better established than mine, one of whom—

a well-known and grave and cautious speaker and writer—went so far as to say in my hearing, “There has been no such art since Horace.” This saying, of course, implies no sort of comparison of the poetry of Barnes with that of Horace. It simply means that, in both alike, thoughts and feelings are expressed and incidents related and represented with the most dainty perfection; neither does it imply that Barnes is nearly so great a poet as many another whose average display of art has been incomparably less. Burns, for example, who, like Barnes, is a poet of the first water but not of the first magnitude, is perhaps better at his best than the Dorset poet, though greatly inferior to him in evenness of quality; and permanent fame is right in her usual practice of judging a poet by his best, even when there is not much of it, and in rarely admitting quantity as a main factor of her calculation. That which is of the greatest value in every true artist is his style, and that may be conveyed almost as effectively in fifty pages as in five hundred.

The absolute pre-eminence of style above all other artistic qualities seems not to have been sufficiently perceived or at least insisted upon by critics, and a few words on that subject are therefore proper in a notice of a writer whose individuality, though it may not be so forcible, is more clearly and delicately pronounced than it is in any other poet of our day. That the proper study of mankind is man, expresses a truth which Pope had scarcely tenderness and subtlety enough of intellect to feel in its fulness. Some one has better expressed the same thought in the words, “Every soul is a celestial Venus to every



other soul." As the human face, the image of the soul, is incomparably the most beautiful object that can be seen by the eyes, the soul itself is the supreme interest and attraction of the intellectual vision; and the variety of this interest and attraction is limited only by the number of those who, in action, manners, or art, are endowed with the faculty of expressing themselves and their inherent distinction, which, could it be fully displayed, would be found to be absolutely unique in each person. In that shadow of the soul, the face, some glimpse of this fundamental uniqueness is always apparent, no vice or power of custom being enough altogether to quench it. In manners, though singularity is common enough, it is very rarely the clear and expressive outcome of the individual life. When it is so it constitutes "distinction," as it is well called. In art, in which singularity is also common, this living uniqueness is exceedingly rare indeed, and it is what is, rightly again, called "genius," that is, the manifestation of the inward man himself. It has been said that he alone who has no style has true style. It would be better to say that he who has no manner has the first condition of style. As theologians affirm that all a man can of himself do towards obtaining positive sanctity is a negative avoidance of the hindrances of sin, so style, the sanctity of art, can only appear in the artist whose ways are purged, in the hour at least of effective production, from all mannerism, eccentricities, and selfish obfuscation by the external life. These evils are so strong and the individuality of nearly all men so weak, that there is about as much chance of any particular child



turning out to be capable of style in art as there is of his being able to fight the battles of Napoleon or to lead the life of St. Francis. There have been whole nations—of which the American is most notable—which have never attained to the production of a single work of art marked by true style.

Now a man's true character or individuality lies, not in his intellect but in his love, not in what he thinks, but in what he is. The "light that lighteth every man" is, in every man, the same in kind, though not in degree; he is essentially differentiated from other men by his love. Old writers bore this in mind when they used the words "spirit" and "genius"; what they called spirit we now call wit or talent. "*L'esprit est le Dieu des instans, le génie est le Dieu des ages,*" says Fr. Lebrun. So far are these from being the same that a man may, like Herrick or Blake, be little better than a blank in intellect, yet be full of the dainty perfume of his peculiar love, whilst a colossus of wit and understanding may be as empty as a tulip of the odour of that sanctity; for a sort of sanctity it really is, always containing as it does some manifest relic of that infantine innocence which nearly all men have trodden under foot, or laughed to death, or otherwise lost touch of, before they were out of their teens. This peculiar faculty, or rather virtue, which alone confers true style upon the poet, is as often as not, nay, more often than not, the grace of those whom even ordinarily clever men look down upon, and justly from their point of view, as "little ones." Little ones they mostly are, but their angels behold the face of their Father, and the words of the

least of them is a song of individual love which was never heard before and never will be heard again.

To this primary claim to an abiding place among such minor classics as Herbert, Suckling, Herrick, Burns, and Blake, William Barnes adds that of a sustained perfection of art with which none of them can compare. His language has the continual slight novelty which Aristotle inculcates as proper to true poetic expression, and something much higher than the *curiosa felicitas*, which has been absurdly rendered "curious felicity," but which means the "careful luck" of him who tries many words, and has the wit to know when memory, or the necessity of metre or rhyme, has supplied him unexpectedly with those which are perhaps even better than he knew how to desire. The words of Barnes are not the carefully made clothes, but the body of his thoughts and feelings. Another still rarer praise of his work is that he never stops in it till he has said all that should be said, and never exceeds that measure by a syllable; and about this art there is not the slightest apparent consciousness either of its abundant fulness or its delicate reticence. He seems, in fact, never to have written except under the sense of a subject that makes its own form, and of feelings which form their own words—that is to say, he is always classic both in form and substance.

Perfect, however, as are the *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*, it would be absurd to call Barnes a poet of the first magnitude or even the second. Every one of the minor classics I have named surpasses him in some point of wit, sweetness, subtlety, or force, as he

surpasses them in the lovely innocence which breathes from his songs of nature and natural affection. He has written no one poem that time is likely to stamp as of value at all equivalent, for instance, to *Genevieve* or the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*; and such a lyric as Spenser's *Epithalamion*, compared with the best song of Barnes, is as Hera to a wood-nymph.

Barnes's reputation has the great advantage—since he could bear the delay of fame without discouragement—of not having been forced. Poor, contented, unambitious, without anything remarkable in his person or conversation or romantic in his circumstances, hidden all his lifetime in a sequestered country parsonage, and having no means, direct or indirect, of affecting the personal hopes or fears of his literary contemporaries, he has been left alone in his humble glory, which was to recite to delighted audiences of farmers and ploughmen and their wives and sweet-hearts a series of lyrics, idylls, and eclogues, which, being the faultless expression of elementary feelings and perceptions, are good for all but those in whom such feelings and perceptions are extinct.

The very best of Barnes's poems are almost as bare of "ornament" and as dependent for effect on their perfection, as a whole, as a tragedy of Æschylus. There is not the slightest touch of "poetry" in the language itself of the rustics who are the *dramatis personæ* of the eclogues, yet poetry has not much to show which is more exquisite in its way than these unconscious and artless confabulations of carters and milkmaids as reflected in the consciousness and arranged by the art of the poet.

I will conclude my statement of the claim of Barnes to be regarded as an English classic by a few words on the likelihood, as it seems to me, of his being one of the last of his sort. Everything in the present state and apparent prospects of civilisation is discouraging to the production of classical work. Boys and girls may lisp in numbers because the numbers come, but no true artist in words can do his arduous though joyful work except in the assured hope of having, sooner or later, an audience; and as time goes on this must seem to him a less and less likely reward and complement of his labour. Barnes's best poems have been before the public for more than forty years; yet what proportion of those who will read this notice have ever held a volume of them in their hands? A hundred or two hundred years ago his general acknowledgment by educated readers would have been immediate. The *Religio Medici* was reprinted eight times in England and translated into most languages of Europe during the lifetime of Sir Thomas Browne, its literary excellence constituting its only attraction, for all "parties" were offended by it. The reading public of England was then less than one-tenth of its present number, making a sale of eight editions thus equivalent to one of eighty editions now. The book having been recognised at the time for what it is, a true classic, has continued to form part of the course of reading expected in cultivated persons. But had it been published in our own day, would it have sold eighty copies? We read of £5, £20, or even £60 in old times having been given by booksellers to persons of wholly untried fame for the copy-

rights of works which time has nevertheless stamped as great classics. It seems scarcely credible, but there can be no reasonable doubt of it. Is it that the present indifference and even repugnance to new excellence of the highest order is accounted for by our having more of the old than we know what to do with? Scarcely; for a man of forty, without being at all a man of unlimited leisure, may very well have perused all that remains of the world's literature that is above or up to the mark of Sir Thomas Browne or William Barnes. The few shelves which would hold all the true classics extant might receive as many more of the like as there is any chance that the next two or three centuries will produce, without burthening the select and leisurely scholar with a sense of how much he had to read. Is it not rather that the power to appreciate either the matter or form of genuine art in writing is dying out, even among those who by their education ought to be the zealous upholders and guardians of a high and pure standard? Lawlessness, self-assertion, oddity instead of individuality, and inorganic polish where there should be the breathing completeness of art, are no longer the delight only of the "groundlings." They are also the lure of leaders of literary fashion, of those whose approval used to be the almost certain forerunner of fame, and that foretaste of it without which the soul of man of genius sickens within him and refuses to exercise its functions. There appears to be little hope that this is only a transitory declension. It is not a reaction but a decay; and the recuperative force, if there be any in the future, shows no signal of

its approach. The peace and joy which are the harvest of a quiet mind, and the conditions—when they are not the inspirations, as they were in Barnes—of true art no longer exist. In America, where it has been well said there is everywhere comfort but no joy, and where popularity, as a clever American lady assured me, lasts a year, and fame ten, we probably have the mirror of our own very near future; and the decline from this present easy-going state of things to the commencement of a series of dark ages, of which no one shall be able to discern the limit, may perhaps be more rapid than most of us imagine. Unpalatable and unacceptable as the suggestion may be, it cannot be denied by persons who are able and willing to look facts in the face that there are already strong indications of a relapse into a long-protracted period of social and political disorganisation, so complete that there shall be no means of leisure or even living for a learned class, nor any audience for what it has to impart. Such recrudescences of civilisation have occurred, and they may occur again, though the prospect may be as incredible to most Europeans at the present moment as it must have been to the lieges of the Eternal City at the height and sudden turning-point of its popular glory and seemingly consolidated order. By Americans the idea would of course be scouted. But American culture and civilisation are identical with those of Europe, only they are in many respects the worse and in very few the better for transplantation. Religion, though widespread, is of a vulgarer and less efficient type than among us; art is absolutely non-existent; and the



vanity which so loudly claims the paternity of the future is the very worst of prognostics for the fulfilment of that expectation. America is beginning where others have ended, in a widely spread and widely indulged desire for riches and luxury. It is said that the disappearance of some of the finest and most carefully cultivated sorts of fruit trees is owing to the fact that the grafts, from which alone they can be reproduced, will live and give other grafts only during the natural lifetime of the original tree. History seems to indicate that a similar law applies to the grafts of culture and civilisation, and that they cannot long survive the failure of the sap in the old trunk.



## XIX

### MRS. MEYNELL

AT rare intervals the world is startled by the phenomenon of a woman whose qualities of mind and heart seem to demand a revision of its conception of womanhood and an enlargement of those limitations which it delights in regarding as essentials of her very nature, and as necessary to her beauty and attractiveness as woman. She belongs to a species quite distinct from that of the typical sweet companion of man's life, the woman who is so sweet and so companionable, even because, as Thomas Aquinas affirms, "she is scarcely a reasonable creature." A Lady Jane Grey, a Mrs. Hutchinson, a Rachel Lady Russell, or a Madame de Hautefort is, however, not less but more womanly for owing her exceptional character to the possession of qualities which are usually the prerogative of the ideal man; a fact which corroborates a theory, not unknown to philosophy and theology, that sex in the soul lies in aspect rather than in substance. "Spirits, at will," says Milton, "can either sex assume, or both"; and women of the grander type, who prefer their womanhood to the assertion of their right to a masculine attitude

towards the world, have always had the world in worship at the feet of their greater and sweeter femininity.

"Originally," says Plato, "there were three sexes." The Church teaches the same thing. God is the great prototype and source of sex: the Father being the original masculine intellect, the Word its feminine reflection, consciousness, or "glory," while the Holy Spirit is defined to be "the embrace," or synthesis, "of the Father and the Word," the *Creator Spiritus*, that aspect (*Persona*) of God (who is "one in substance") which is the immediate source of all life, love, joy, and power. In man, the express image of God, *genius* is that divine third, quickening, and creative sex, which contains and is the two others, and which is so rare, owing to the loss of balance in man's nature, that Plato speaks of it as no longer existing.

In the realms of art and letters *genius* is, in its initial stage, perceptive reason, the rare power of seeing self-evident things; and its modes of expression correspond with its character. A strong and predominatingly masculine mind has often much to say, but a very imperfect ability to say it; the predominatingly feminine mind can say anything, but has nothing to say; but with the double-sexed insight of *genius*, realities and expressions are wedded from their first conception, and, even in their least imposing developments, are living powers, and of more practical importance than the results of the highest efforts of mind when either of its factors greatly predominates over the other.

I am about to direct the reader's attention to one of the very rarest products of nature and grace—a woman of genius, one who, I am bound to confess, has falsified the assertion which I made some time ago, that no female writer of our time had attained to true "distinction." In the year 1875, Miss Alice Thompson (now Mrs. Meynell), the sister of Miss Thompson (Lady Butler), the painter of the famous "Roll Call," published a volume of poems, which were as near to being poetry as any woman of our time, with the exception of Miss Christina Rossetti, has succeeded in writing. But though this volume, in the opinion of some critics—Ruskin, D. G. Rossetti, Aubrey de Vere, and myself among others—far surpassed the work of far more famous "poetesses," it was not poetry in the sense which causes all real poets, however subordinate in their kind, to rank as immortals. There is sufficient intellect and imagination in Mrs. Meynell's Poems to have supplied a hundred of that splendid insect, Herrick; enough passion and pure human affection for a dozen poets like Crashaw or William Barnes; they breathe, in every line, the purest *spirit* of womanhood, yet they have not sufficient force of that *ultimate* womanhood, the expressional *body*, to give her the right to be counted among classical poets. No woman ever has been such a poet: probably no woman ever will be, for (strange paradox!) though, like my present subject, she may have enough and to spare of the virile intellect, and be also exquisitely womanly, she has not womanhood enough.

The feminine factor in the mind of the great poet

is, indeed, a greater thing than woman—it is goddess. Keats and Shelley, in their best works, were wholly feminine; they were merely exponents of sensitive beauty; but into this they had such an insight, and with it such a power of self-identification, as no woman has ever approached. Mrs. Meynell's verses are full of delicate and original thought, for the most part faultlessly expressed. Witness this sonnet, called "Renouncement," which has deservedly found a place in most of our many modern anthologies:—

" I must not think of thee ; and tired yet strong  
I shun the thought that lurks in all delight—  
The thought of thee—and in the blue heaven's height,  
And in the sweetest passage of a song.  
Oh, just beyond the fairest thoughts that throng  
This breast, the thought of thee waits, hidden yet bright ;  
But it must never, never come in sight ;  
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.  
But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,  
When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,  
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,  
Must doff my will as raiment laid away,—  
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep  
I run, I run, I am gather'd to thy heart."

This, like all Mrs. Meynell's verse, is true, beautiful, tender, and, negatively, almost faultless; but it does not attain the classical standard. Compared with that which is classical in the writings of second or even third-rate poets, like Herrick, Crashaw, and William Barnes, it is "as moonlight unto sunlight." Our admiration is, indeed, strongly awakened by it, but we think of and admire the poetess still more than her poetry. It does not strain to rival man's work, as

Mrs. Browning's does, nor to put forth the great, impersonal claims of great poetry, nor claim to have mastered the arduous *technique* whereby every phrase becomes a manifold mystery of significance and music. Mrs. Meynell's thoughts and feelings seem to be half-suffocated by their own sweetness and pathos, so that, though they can speak with admirable delicacy, tenderness, and—that rarest of graces—unsuperfluousness, they cannot sing. With extraordinary power of self-judgment, she discovered this fact while she was as yet a mere girl, and, disdaining to do anything which she could not do, not only well, but best, and notwithstanding the encouragement to persevere in poetry which she received from a large and high class of critics, she gave up the attempt, and has hardly since written a line.

But, in a very small volume of very short essays, which she has just published, this lady has shown an amount of perceptive reason and ability to discern self-evident things as yet undiscerned, a reticence, fulness, and effectiveness of expression, which place her in the very front rank of living writers in prose. The greater part of this little volume is *classical* work, embodying, as it does, new thought of general and permanent significance in perfect language, and bearing, in every sentence, the hall-mark of genius, namely, the marriage of masculine force of insight with feminine grace and tact of expression. Of the "sweetness and wit," which are said, by Donne, I think, to be woman's highest attainment, there is in these little essays abundance, but they are only the living drapery of thought which has the virile qualities

Mrs. Meynell's  
classical  
work

of simplicity, continuity, and positiveness. The essays of Emerson, of which those of Mrs. Meynell will sometimes remind the reader, are not to be compared with the best of hers in these greater merits; moreover, the "transcendentalism" of the American writer afforded a far easier field than that chosen by the English lady. It is very easy to speak splendidly and profusely about things which transcend speech; but to write beautifully, profitably and originally about truths which come home to everybody, and which everybody can test by common sense; to avoid with sedulous reverence the things which are beyond the focus of the human eye, and to direct attention effectively to those which are well within it, though they have hitherto been undiscerned through lack of attention or the astounding imperfection of common vision for the reality of common things, is a very different attainment. Gaiety of manner with gravity of matter, truth perceived clearly and expressed with ease and joy, constitute the very highest and rarest of prose writing. Emerson had no gravity and no true sequence of thought, for he lived or attempted to live in a sphere in which the laws of gravitation do not operate, and which, being without limitation, is without unity. In the writing of Mrs. Meynell we have brightness and epigram enough, but they are but the photosphere of weighty, intelligible and simple human interest; and they never tempt her, as the possession of such wit almost inevitably tempts the male writer, to any display of scorn and contempt. She has always pity and palliatory explanation for the folly or falsehood which she exposes so trenchantly. Perhaps the unkindest



hit in her book is that in which she laughs at the New-Worldling, thus:—

“The difficulty of dealing, in the course of any critical duty, with decivilised man lies in this: when you accuse him of vulgarity—sparing him, no doubt, the word—he defends himself against the charge of barbarism. Especially from new soil—transatlantic, colonial—he faces you, bronzed, with a half conviction of savagery, partly persuaded of his own youthfulness of race. He writes and recites poems about ranches and canyons; they are designed to betray the recklessness of his nature, and to reveal the good that lurks in the lawless ways of a young society. He is there to explain himself, voluble with a glossary for his own artless slang. But his colonialism is only provincialism very articulate. The new air does but make old decadences seem more stale; the young soil does but set into fresh conditions the ready-made, the uncostly, the refuse feeling of a race decivilising. American fancy played long this pattering part of youth. The New Englander hastened to assure you with so self-denying a face he did not wear war-paint and feathers, that it became doubly difficult to communicate to him that you had suspected him of nothing wilder than a second-hand dress-coat.”

In this last phrase, as in all Mrs. Meynell's wit, the razor-edge cuts so keenly because of the weight at its back. In one little sentence she shatters a world of pretension which, without deceiving anyone, has puzzled most of us in the attempt to define and dissipate it; and henceforward we shall never be without an answer to the worn-out and vulgarised civilisee when he at once boasts of and apologises for being a fine young savage.

“Decivilised man,” continues our authoress, “is not peculiar to new soil. The English town, too, knows him in all his dailiness. In England, too, he has a literature, an art, a music, all his own, derived from many and various things of price. Trash, in the fulness of its insimplicity and cheapness, is im-



possible without a beautiful past. Its chief characteristic—which is futility, not failure—could not be achieved but by the long abuse, the rotatory reproduction, the quotidian disgrace, of the utterances of art, especially the utterance by words. Gaiety, vigour, vitality, the organic quality, purity, simplicity, precision—all these are among the antecedents of trash. . . . The decivilised have every grace as the antecedent of their vulgarities, every distinction as the precedent of their mediocrities. No ballad-concert song, feign it sigh, frolic, or laugh, but has the excuse that the feint was suggested, was made easy, by some once living sweetness. Nor are the decivilised to blame as having in their own persons possessed civilisation and marred it. They did not possess it ; they were born into some tendency to derogation, into an inclination for things mentally inexpensive. And the tendency can hardly do other than continue. Nothing can look duller than the future of this second-hand and multiplying world."

Where, in the whole field of modern literature, can we find a more significant, original, and convincing piece of writing than this?

In the way of art-criticism very few have equalled Mrs. Meynell's little essay on Velasquez, whom she calls "the first Impressionist." In this essay she, for the first time, and with the extreme brevity and fulness of genius, explains and justifies Impressionism, and abolishes the pretensions of almost all modern "Impressionists" to their self-assumed title. The best of this lady's essays, which seldom run to greater length than about five or six pages, are so perfect that to give extracts as samples is like chipping off corners of "specimen" rubies or emeralds for the like purpose. Their value is not in arithmetical, but in geometrical, proportion to their bulk. Since, however, there is no room for the whole ruby, take this chip from the "Point of Honour."

“Not without significance is the Spanish nationality of Velasquez. In Spain was the point put upon honour; and Velasquez was the first Impressionist. As an Impressionist he claimed, implicitly if not explicitly, a whole series of delicate trusts in his trustworthiness. . . . He kept the chastity of art when other masters were content with its honesty, and when others saved artistic conscience he safeguarded the point of honour. Contemporary masters more or less proved their position, and convinced the world by something of demonstration; the first Impressionist simply asked that his word should be accepted. To those who will not take his word he offers no bond. To those who will he grants the distinction of a share in his responsibility. Somewhat unrefined, in comparison with his lofty and simple claim to be believed on a suggestion, is the commoner painter's production of his credentials, his appeal to the sanction of ordinary experience, his self-defence against the suspicion of making irresponsible mysteries in art. ‘You can see for yourself,’ the lesser man seems to say to the world; ‘thus things are, and I render them in such manner that your intelligence may be satisfied.’ This is an appeal to average experience, at the best to cumulative experience, and with the average or the sum, art cannot deal without derogation. The Spaniard seems to say, ‘Thus things are in my pictorial sight. Trust me: I apprehend them so.’ We are not excluded from his councils, but we are asked to attribute a certain authority to him, master of the craft as he is, master of that art of seeing pictorially which is the beginning and not far from the end—not far short of the whole—of the art of painting. So little, indeed, are we shut out from the mysteries of a great Impressionist's impression, that Velasquez requires us to be in some degree his colleagues. Thus may each of us to whom he appeals take praise from the praised. He leaves my educated eyes to do a little of the work. He respects my responsibility no less—though he respects it less explicitly—than I do his. . . . Because Impressionism is so free, therefore is it so doubly bound. To undertake this art for the sake of its privileges, without confessing its obligations, or at least without confessing them up to the point of honour, is to take a vulgar freedom; to see immunities precisely where there are duties. A very mob of men have taken Impressionism upon themselves in this our late

day. It is against all probabilities that more than a few among these have within them the point of honour. . . . May the gods guard us from the further popularising of Impressionism; for the point of honour is the simple secret of the few."

In no other authoress of this century can anything be positively inferred, concerning the character of the writer, from her works; but there breathes from almost every paragraph and stanza of these two little volumes the indefinable but unmistakable perfume of a sweet, noble and singular personality. Mrs. Meynell's style is like the subtle and convincing commentary of a beautiful voice.

The range of subject in this score of miniature essays is very large, and an extraordinary degree of finished culture in various directions is displayed, with an entire absence of pretension or even consciousness. "The Rhythm of Life," "A Remembrance," "The Sun," "The Flower," "By the Railway Side," "Composure," "Domus Angusta," "Rejection," "Innocence and Experience," "De-civilised," "The Point of Honour," bear no resemblance one to the other, except in their equal charm of fulness, brevity, original insight, experience, graceful learning, and unique beauty of style. The authoress never falls below the high standard she has attained in the two essays I have now quoted, except in cases in which she has chosen matter unworthy of her powers. The merits of Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the vulgarity of Dickens and the caricaturists of fifty years ago, may afford very good subjects for ordinary critics, but diamond-dust and a razor-edge, though it may have the weight of a hatchet behind it, are quite

unadapted for the working up of blocks of teak or sandstone. There is a sort of sanctity about such delicate genius as Mrs. Meynell's which makes one shrink to see the robe of her Muse brush against anything common. Let her respect her own graceful powers and personality, as every man of true delicacy and insight must respect them, and she will become one of the fairest and steadiest lights of English literature, though she may remain unobtrusive to "the crowd, incapable of perfectness."

## XX

### MADAME DE HAUTEFORT<sup>1</sup>

THERE is nothing comparable for moral force to the charm of truly noble manners. The mind is, in comparison, only slightly and transiently impressed by heroic actions, for these are felt to be but uncertain signs of a heroic soul; nothing less than a series of them, more sustained and varied than circumstances are ever found to demand, could assure us, with the infallible certainty required for the highest power of example, that they were the faithful reflex of the ordinary spirit of the actor. The spectacle of patient suffering, though not so striking, is morally more impressive; for we know that

“Action is transitory—a step, a blow,  
The motion of a muscle this way or that—  
'Tis done; and, in the after vacancy,  
We wonder at ourselves like men betray'd;  
Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,  
And has the nature of infinity.”

The mind, however, has a very natural repugnance to the sustained contemplation of this species of ex-

<sup>1</sup> I have drawn the materials of this essay mainly from the *Life of Madame de Hautefort*, by Victor Cousin.

ample, and is much more willingly persuaded by a spectacle precisely the reverse—namely, that of goodness actually upon the earth triumphant, and bearing in its ordinary demeanour, under whatever circumstances, the lovely stamp of obedience to that highest and most rarely-fulfilled commandment, “Rejoice evermore.” Unlike action or suffering, such obedience is not so much the way to heaven, as a picture, say rather a part, of heaven itself; and truly beautiful manners will be found upon inspection to involve a continual and visible compliance with that apostolical injunction. A right obedience of this kind must be the crown and completion of all lower kinds of obedience. It is not compatible with the bitter humiliations of the habit of any actual sin; it excludes selfishness, since the condition of joy, as distinguished from pleasure, is generosity, and a soul in the practice of going forth from itself; it is no sensual partiality for the “bright side” of things, no unholy repugnance to the consideration of sorrow; but a habit of lifting life to a height at which all sides of it become bright, and all moral difficulties intelligible: in action it is a salubrity about which doctors will not disagree; in the countenance it is a loveliness about which connoisseurs will not dispute; in the demeanour it is a lofty gentleness, which, without pride, patronises all the world, and which, without omitting the minutest temporal obligations or amenities, does everything with an air of immortality. When Providence sets its inheritors upon a hill where they cannot be hid, acknowledging, as it were, their deserts by conferring upon them conspicuous fortune and cor-

poreal advantages, and proving them by various and splendid opportunities, the result is an example to which, as I have said, there is nothing else to be compared in the way of moral agency ; a spectacle so clear in the demonstration of human majesty and loveliness, that the honouring of it with love and imitation is the only point of worship upon which persons of all countries, faiths, customs, and morals, are in perfectly catholic agreement. For the benefit of a single such example it were scarcely possible that the world could pay too dearly. Monarchy and aristocracy have nothing to fear from the arguments of their opponents so long as democracies have failed to produce a Sidney or a Bayard, a Rachel Lady Russell or a Madame de Hautefort.

It is far from my intention to imply that the loveliest blossoms of humanity appear, like the flowers of the aloe, at centenary intervals, and then only in king's gardens. We are not allowed to doubt but that the poor and suffering most often are what "the rich should be, right-minded" ; and that they therefore, more frequently than the rich, have the foundation of right manners. Nevertheless, spiritual loveliness when found in conspicuous places, and "clothed upon" with extraordinary personal and intellectual gifts, while it is more impressive than humble worth in the sight even of the best, as being exposed to subtler temptations to deny itself, is made visible to many who would refuse to acknowledge the same lustre were it shining in a dark place, and is more imposing to all, not only because all are naturally delighted with the extraordinary occurrence of harmony



between the apparently hostile realms of grace and nature, fortune and desert, but also because such harmony explains, exalts, and really completes its seemingly-opposed elements, and grace, expressing itself with thorough culture and knowledge of the world, becomes natural, and nature, instructed in its true perfection, gracious. Moreover, fine manners are always more or less an art, and this art is one which the poor and socially obscure have no means of bringing to perfection; their lives may be purified in the furnace of affliction, and worked by the blows of circumstance into the finest temper; faith and resignation may give evenness, and love a certain lustre to their demeanour; but the last touch, which is that which polishes the mirror, and tells more in the eyes of the world than all the rest, is the work of art. And, let it be acknowledged, none of the fine arts is so fine as that of manners, and, of all, it is probably the only one which is cultivated in the next world as well as in this. The contagion of fine manners is irresistible, and wherever the possessor of them moves, he leaves behind him lovers and imitators who indefinitely, if not infinitely, propagate his likeness. Unlike the lower arts of poetry, music, architecture, and painting, which may be regarded as secondary and derivative from this primary art of good manners, which imitates nothing but God—unlike these arts, in which men have always been the most excellent professors, that of fine manners has been carried to its highest perfection by women. Than some of these, in whom station, beauty, wit, and holiness, have been united, it seems scarcely possible that the angels

themselves should shine with a more bright and amiable lustre.

Women, not to speak of their beauty, their docile and self-adaptive natures, and that inherent aptitude for goodness which makes devotion their chief intemperance, enjoy, in their privilege of subordination to men, a vast advantage for the development of the noblest manners. Obedience is the proper perfection of humanity; fine manners are the expression of that perfection; and that obedience and consequent perfection are likely to be frequent and complete in proportion as the object to which submission is directly due is near and comprehensible. Remote and incomprehensible Deity is the "head of the man"; and his obedience to that vast and invisible authority though of a loftier nature, is necessarily incomplete in its character and indistinct in its expression when compared with the submission of the woman to the image of the same authority in himself. While the one obeys from faith, the other does so from sight; and the sensible "*beauty* of holiness" is therefore almost exclusively the prerogative of the woman. The light of her duty strikes directly upon that to which it is relative, and is reflected back in loveliness upon herself; while his appears to be lost in the space it has to traverse to its object. Here is a great spiritual distinction of sex, which those who reject the doctrine of subordination confound and destroy; pulling down the majesty of man by abolishing his principal responsibility, and turning the peculiar strength and glory of the woman into weakness and disgrace.

There was one place and time singular in the

history of the world for the development of the woman's character to the extreme limit of her capacities in various directions. The court of France in the reign of Louis XIII., the regency of Anne of Austria, and the early part of the reign of Louis XIV., produced a company of ladies, in whose presence all the remaining tract of history looks dim. The wars of the League had left the great nobles of France in the enjoyment of an amount of personal freedom, importance, and dignity, greater than was ever, before or since, the lot of any aristocracy. Chivalrous traditions; the custom of appeal to arms for the settlement of personal quarrels, a custom which is said to have cost the country some nine hundred of its best gentlemen in about nine years; the worship of womanhood carried to a pharisaical strictness of observance, were conditions which, though socially disastrous in various ways, exalted the individual *valeur* of men to the most imposing height, and rendered a corresponding exaltation imperative upon the women, in order to secure that personal predominance which it is their instinct to seek. The political state of France was one which afforded the members of its court extraordinary occasions for the display of character. That state was one of a vast transition. Feudal privileges had to be either moderated, defined, and constitutionalised, or else destroyed. The revolution which was about to operate in England and to end in liberty, was working in France with a manifestly opposite destiny. Richelieu and Mazarin were slowly and surely bringing about an absolute despotism as the only solution of the political difficulties of the State

consistent with its greatness, and, probably, even with its unity. The opposition of the nobles to the diminution of their power was carried on with far greater boldness and grandeur of personal effect, inasmuch as it was done without directly affronting the monarchical authority in the persons of its weak representatives, Louis XIII. and Anne of Austria. The two great ministers were the objects against which the whole wrath of the nobility was directed. Hence the war against encroaching monarchy was in great part waged in the court itself; and the king and the queen-regent were themselves found from time to time in the ranks of the indignant aristocracy. Here, then, was a wonderful field for individual effect; and that field was open to women no less, or even more, than to men; for the struggle, indeed, on the part of the latter was, upon the whole, a selfish and ignoble one; no national idea inspired it; every one was for himself and his house; and the women were perfectly able to sympathise and assist in quarrels of this personal and intelligible interest. Richelieu and Mazarin were moreover exactly the kind of enemies to excite the peculiar hostility, and prove the peculiar talents, of women. In their modes of thought and action, these ministers were too much like women not to be naturally obnoxious to their hatred. In these days, too, rose Port-Royal, with its female reformers, saints, and theologians, offering an asylum to weary and repentant worldliness and passion or a fresh field for vanity which had exhausted its ordinary irritants. On every side lay great temptations and great opportunities; and the women of the period

seem to have been endowed with singular qualifications for the illustration of both. Of this constellation of splendid personalities, Marie de Hautefort was the crowning glory.

She was born in 1616, and was soon after left an orphan and committed to the charge of her grandmother, Madame de la Flotte Hauterive. Her early years were passed in the country ; but there was much talk of the court and its pleasures at her grandmother's house ; and the beautiful and intellectual girl, at eleven years of age—then almost a woman in figure, and then and always too innocent to have any element of asceticism in her sincere piety, offered fervent prayers to Heaven to be allowed to—*go to court !* Madame de la Flotte had affairs which brought her to Paris ; Marie went with her, and made such an impression, that the queen-mother, Mary de Medicis, at once placed her among her maids-of-honour. Though she was but twelve years of age, her manners were distinguished by that “*très grand air, tempéré par une retenue presque sévère,*” which to the last continued to be the quality of her chaste and noble loveliness. Her beauty of person must have been of the very loftiest kind, if we may judge from the effect which she immediately produced in the most brilliant and fastidious court in the world. She had the name of Aurora given to her, as descriptive of her fresh and innocent splendour. When she was fourteen the king fell in love with her. He took her away from the queen-mother, and placed her with the queen-consort, who at first was naturally somewhat shy of a maid-of-honour who was manifestly a rival. But Anne soon

discovered in Mademoiselle de Hautefort a mind from which she had nothing to dread. As for the *affections* of the king, Anne enjoyed too little of them at any time to care much for the platonic alliance which she saw plainly was the worst she had to fear ; she soon found also that her misfortunes and neglect constituted a much more powerful claim to the noble girl's attachment than the power and prestige of the greatest monarch in the world. Thus the favourite of the king enjoyed the singular distinction of being at the same time scarcely less the favourite of his wife. The first public mark of attention from the king to the maid-of-honour was on occasion of a sermon at which the queen and the court were present. The maids-of-honour, according to custom, were seated on the ground. The king sent the velvet, on which he was kneeling, for Mademoiselle de Hautefort to sit upon. She blushed with confusion, obeyed a sign from the queen to take it, but placed it by her side. Such a mixture of modesty and tact was not unappreciated in the court of France. On another occasion an incident occurred which will serve to explain how the position of Mademoiselle de Hautefort was one against which not the slightest exception could be taken, a little allowance being made for the liberal manners of the seventeenth century. The king entered the apartment of the queen as she and her maid-of-honour were discussing a note, containing something that it was not desired that the king should see. He pressed very much to obtain it, and Mademoiselle de Hautefort found it impossible to keep the queen's secret except by placing the paper in her bosom. This at once ter-



minated the dispute; although the queen in jest held the hands of the beautiful girl, and dared the king to take the letter from its sanctuary. Though the religion of Louis, and his reverence for this noble lady, prevented him from affronting her with his passion, his extreme jealousy was a source of continual annoyance to her; and many a time the pride of the good and gay young beauty resented the assiduities and pretensions of an *amitié* which had no right to such exclusiveness, and no foundation for such suspicions; for, with several of the noblest gentlemen of France at her feet, Mademoiselle de Hautefort's heart was untouched. After these misunderstandings with his "friend," Louis would sit and sulk in a corner for hours; and there was no gaiety at the court until a good understanding was restored. At this time the affections of the maid-of-honour were chiefly set upon her mistress, for whose sake alone she seems to have endured attentions which, to say the least, incommoded her. Madame de Motteville, in her Memoirs, assures us that Mademoiselle de Hautefort treated Louis at all times "as badly as it was permitted to treat a king." His neglect and hatred of his wife, founded upon the atrocious suspicions which Richelieu, for political purposes, succeeded in bringing upon her, deprived him of the respect of one whose generous nature revolted against all appearance of injustice. Towards Richelieu himself, as the chief author of the queen's misfortunes, she entertained feelings of contempt and dislike which she made no effort to conceal, although the mighty minister loaded her with compliments and attentions, calculating that her presence at the court



was not fitted to increase the favour of Anne with Louis. Finding, however, that all his endeavours to change her from an enemy into a friend were vain, and that she was doing more service to the queen by pleading her cause than disservice by her personal attractions, Richelieu determined upon getting rid of her influence. He persuaded the king that she ridiculed his manners and his passion in his absence; and, instead of appeasing his scruples of conscience, as heretofore, he represented his affection as dangerous and contrary to religion. These means proving only partially effective, Richelieu called into play a rival beauty, Louise Angélique de la Fayette, who, with scarcely inferior virtues and personal attractions, had a nature more sympathetic with that of Louis. The king found in this lady a compassionate, patient, and friendly listener to the sorrows and complaints which he delighted in talking about to women; and their relationship soon ripened into the high and tender friendship which was ordinarily the limit of the king's "amours"; for, with all his weaknesses, his religion was sincere and his refinement remarkable; and the woman whom he could have suspected of a willingness to sacrifice her dignity to his affection would never have possessed it. In this instance, however, the king in a moment of passion forgot his better knowledge and Mademoiselle de la Fayette's honour so far as to propose that she should take up her residence at Versailles, and be "toute à lui." His punishment was heavy, but just. The noble young lady, between whom and himself there had for two years subsisted a most deep and happy friendship, determined, after

many regrets and a strong struggle with her heart, to have no further communication with him but through the grating of a nunnery. Upon these terms, however, the king continued for many months to see her at the convent of St. Mary of the Visitation. Like Mademoiselle de Hautefort, Mademoiselle de la Fayette was constant in her favourable representations of the queen to her consort ; and it was after one of these singular visits, that the king, prevented by a storm from returning to St. Maur, stopped a night at the Louvre, where was the queen, who nine months after gave birth to Louis XIV. During this period, Mademoiselle de Hautefort remained in the service of Anne, who was almost entirely abandoned by Louis, and solaced herself with maintaining, chiefly by means of Madame de Chevreuse, a correspondence with her royal relatives of Spain, then at war with France. The fact of this correspondence was treasonous ; and the nature of it, whatever it may have been, was such that the queen had the greatest terror of its transpiring. At one moment her fate depended upon the correspondence of her replies to the examination imposed upon her by Richelieu with the statements of her confidant and aid La Porte, who was then in the Bastille. Mademoiselle de Hautefort, as heroic as she was beautiful and tender, disguised herself *en grisette*, left the Louvre at dawn, went in a *fiacre* alone to the Bastille, waited ever so long exposed to the coarse pleasantries of the *corps de garde* at the gate, obtained a solitary interview with the Chevalier de Jars, who had just received his pardon on the very scaffold for his part in the queen's affairs, prevailed upon him to risk

his head again by making himself the means of conveying a letter to La Porte, returned as she came, had the good fortune to reach her apartment unrecognised; and was then for the first time overcome with the terrible risks to which she had exposed herself, and, what she prized far more, her unblemished reputation. In the political intrigues of the queen and Madame de Chevreuse she had no interest. Richelieu and the king were unjust; Anne suffered, and required service and consolation; and that was all the noble maiden knew or cared to know.

The prospect of the queen's becoming a mother, as soon as it was known, made a great improvement in her position with the king, who was thus again thrown into the society of Mademoiselle de Hautefort. His passion, for a time suspended by his affection for Mademoiselle de la Fayette, revived, and maintained for two years more its chaste and stormy life. The proud maiden refused to acquire any advantage to her not very splendid fortune; and the only honour she consented to receive was one from the hands of the queen—namely, the office of *dame d'atours*, which entitled her to be called Madame. Richelieu's jealousies reawakened with the passion of the king; there was no second Louise de la Fayette at hand; and the minister took advantage of the part which, as he had the means of proving, Mademoiselle de Hautefort had taken in aiding the queen in her forbidden correspondence with Madame de Chevreuse and other active enemies of the cardinal, to demand the dismissal of the favourite from the court. Louis resisted. Richelieu had recourse to his last and

always successful trick: he gave the king to understand that he must choose between his minister and his mistress. Even this argument, however, only prevailed upon Louis to consent to her being exiled for a period of fourteen days. She refused to believe the direction to absent herself, on receiving it through Richelieu, and obtained an audience of the king, demanding of what crime she was accused. Louis replied that the order was wrung from him against his will; that it was but for temporary reasons of state, and that it gave him the greatest grief. This was not enough to satisfy the dignity and self-respect of the lady, who told him that in bidding him adieu for fourteen days she bade him adieu for ever. Mademoiselle de Chémérault, another of the queen's ladies, was dismissed at the same time; but only in order that she might continue to act as Richelieu's spy upon the words and actions of the noble creature who fancied her her sincere friend. Mademoiselle de Hautefort thought that the queen had not treated Mademoiselle de Chémérault with sufficient generosity in the gifts she made her on her dismissal; and, utterly careless of her own interests, she addressed to Anne the noblest letter of remonstrance which it has ever been our happiness to read. Louis died without beholding her again; and, indeed, his fickle nature had been diverted from his sorrow for her loss by a new favourite, Cinq Mars. Anne was no sooner a widow than she begged Madame de Hautefort to return. She was now twenty-seven, and at the height of her beauty. She became the chief ornament of the famous Maison Rambouillet—at that

time the place of reunion for the most refined and exclusive society the world has seen. Here, surrounded by the atmosphere of literary dilettantism, which turned all her contemporaries more or less into blue-stockings, and which in its less dignified development at the assemblies of Mademoiselle de Scudéry afterwards provoked the ridicule of Molière, Madame de Hautefort's delicacy and tact preserved her from the airs of the *précieuse*. The few letters of her writing which remain are "toujours spirituelles, mais très négligées"; and a contemporary writer says, "Pour les vers, c'est sa passion: et, quoiqu'elle n'en fasse point, *elle les récite comme si elle les faisait.*" As she was free from the prevailing intellectual dilettantism, she was equally a stranger to the more tempting, and, at that time, all but universal dilettantism of the affections. The consequence was, that the passions she inspired were deep, sincere, and really chivalrous. The mock chivalry of La Rochefoucauld became genuine towards her. On the eve of a battle he gave her brother a letter, containing a declaration of his love, to be given to her if he died; if not, to be returned. "C'était là," says M. Cousin, "comme on faisait la cour à Mlle. de Hautefort." Her nobler charms for a while eclipsed the attractions of Madame de Chevreuse in the eyes of Charles of Lorraine. On one occasion he took prisoner a French gentleman whom he discovered to be slightly acquainted with her. "I give you your liberty," he said; "and require nothing for your ransom but the honour of hearing that you have kissed, upon my part, the hem of the robe of Madame de Hautefort." And many

another, in whom love had hitherto been vice, found it the well-head of virtue when inspired by her. A noble young soldier, the Marquis de Gêvres, had the inexpressible honour and happiness of touching the heart of this lady; but her royal admirer prevented their marriage, which was in course of arrangement; and, just as De Gêvres was restored to his hopes by the king's death, and was about to receive the staff of Marshal of France for his brilliant services, he was killed at the siege of Thionville. Madame de Hautefort's magnificent reserve upon all points touching her *own* interests and feelings permitted to none of the aristocratic memoir-writers of the time the means of informing posterity how far she was affected by these incidents.

Madame de Hautefort, on her return to the court of Anne of Austria, after the death of Richelieu and Louis XIII., had every reason to calculate upon reaping the reward of her faithful services, as far as such services can be rewarded temporally, in the unimpeded favour of the queen, who was now a queen indeed. But this change from the position of the powerless and oppressed consort to the absolute regent was not really favourable to Madame de Hautefort. She cared very little for politics, and very much for her personal friends; and she was not prepared to look coldly upon all her old alliances, formed at first in the service and interest of the queen, merely because Anne, with a sense of responsibility which made the sacrifice a virtue in *her*, chose to abandon her former connexions, and to take up with the partisans of Richelieu and the monarchy. The loyalty of Madame



de Hautefort was of too high and heavenly a character for that. Her position at court, which she by no means under-valued, might still, however, have been maintained, had it not been for the peculiar favour to which Mazarin now rose, and the scandal created by his nightly conferences with the queen. It was more than the pride and delicacy of the *dame d'atours* could bear. Moreover, she was *dévoté* full twenty years before the usual age—for she was now only twenty-seven, and in all the splendour of her beauty; and affairs of state, which were made the excuse for these conferences, were trifles in her eyes when compared with a wilful indifference to even the “appearance of evil.” She regarded silence under these circumstances as a crime; and, far from her being intimidated by the dangers of interference and expostulation, those dangers acted as provocatives to a virtue of which the only drawback was a heroic intemperance, and a slight defect of suavity when, but only when, it had to do with the failings of kings and queens. In fact, Madame de Hautefort treated Anne, in her turn, “as ill as it was permitted to treat a queen”; that is to say, she displayed a marked disapproval of her conduct, and made no concealment of her dislike of Mazarin, which was unmitigated, although he, like Richelieu, did his very best to be well with her. Failing, he, like his predecessor, determined to get rid of her uncongenial influence; and the very means which Richelieu had used with Louis XIII., Mazarin employed with his royal mistress. He represented Madame de Hautefort as being in the habit of *publicly* expressing her views of the queen’s conduct; and Anne, already irritated



by the private representations of her *dame d'atours*, was completely estranged from her in heart by the calumnies and exaggerations of the minister. But to dismiss her from the court was not a step to be taken in haste. Madame de Hautefort was the idol of two very considerable parties, the Importants and the Saints; and in the court itself she was without an enemy beside Mazarin and the mistress whom she persisted in serving too well. The little king, Louis XIV., was devotedly attached to her, and used to call her his wife; and several of the chief nobles of the country were suitors for her hand; in particular, Gassion, the general-in-chief of the French cavalry, the Duke de Liancour, and the Duke Charles de Schomberg, who were among the most valuable servants of the monarchy, were devoted to this lady with a passion which would not have forgiven any injury to her. The Duke de Schomberg seemed to be favoured by Madame de Hautefort; and it was highly to Mazarin's interest that an alliance should take place which would make her the wife of a man who hated partisanship, and would at least secure her neutrality towards the chief minister whom he served. The duke is thus painted by a contemporary: "Il avait les premières charges de la cour; il ne voyait que les princes au-dessus de lui. Il était fait à peu près comme on dépeint les héros de romans: il était noir; mais sa mine haute, guerrière, et majestueuse, inspirait du respect à ses amis et de la crainte à ses ennemis; il était magnifique, libéral, et avait fait des dépenses extraordinaires dans les emplois qu'il avait eu en commandant les armées de France. Sa

mine était tellement pleine de majesté, qu'un jour, étant chez une dame et étant dans la ruelle avec un habit fort brillant d'or et d'argent, une nourrice de cette dame entrant dans la chambre en fut si surprise qu'elle s'approcha d'une demoiselle et lui demanda quel roi était là auprès de sa maîtresse?" A man, in externals at least, not unworthy of our heroine. But her true and stately soul did nothing in haste. She subjected her suitor's passion to the test of a long and dubious courtship ; and felt herself bound not to abandon the court, as she probably might have to do for Languedoc, which was his government, until all had been done to retrieve the queen from her position with Mazarin ; who was thus at length compelled to obtain by open rupture what he had hoped to effect quietly, and as if in the interest of his proud and beautiful enemy. The party of the Importants was scattered by a sort of *coup d'état* ; several even of the ladies about the queen's person were dismissed or warned ; and Madame de Hautefort, of all Mazarin's political enemies, was the only one of any consequence who escaped defeat and humiliation on this occasion. *She* was far above suspicion of having had any part in the conspiracy which threw so many others into Mazarin's power ; the candour and openness of her enmity puzzled and awed the prince of intriguers, and enabled her to dispute his influence with the queen, long after all the Importants, including the infinitely clever Madame de Chevreuse, were for the time put to silence. Madame de Hautefort was, moreover, to the party of the Saints what Madame de Chevreuse was to the Importants ; and her opposition to Mazarin was made

formidable by being supported with the whole influence of the *religieuses* of the convents of the Filles-de-Sainte-Marie, the Carmelites, and the Val-de-Grâce. But the warfare thus carried on afforded no cause for open accusation; and it was upon the always somewhat rash generosity of Madame de Hautefort in interceding for those whom she considered to have been unjustly treated, that her fall from court favour was made to depend. She irritated the queen greatly by representations in favour of Beaufort, in whose guilt she did not believe; and on one occasion was so emphatic in recommending the claims of some old servant to Anne's consideration, that the queen told her plainly that she was weary of her reprimands, and altogether dissatisfied with her conduct; and the next morning the *dame d'atours* received a command to quit the court. For a time she was in despair at having, as it appeared, irrevocably offended her to whose service her entire life had been devoted. Like Louise Angélique de la Fayette, she withdrew to the convent of Filles-de-Sainte-Marie, with the intention of becoming one of the *religieuses*; but, happily for the world, her lovely light was destined not to be so hidden under a bushel. Her adorers showed the sincerity of their vows by hastening to renew them now that she was in disgrace. The Duke de Schomberg's solicitations were listened to; and Madame de Hautefort, after a crowning act of nobility which we have not space to relate, but which involved a momentary giving up of her lover for the supposed interests of his family, became the Duchess de Schomberg at the age of thirty, in the year 1646. For ten years she was the

tenderest and happiest of wives, and afterwards the holiest of widows. Her personal beauty increased with years, as perfectly noble beauty always does. As she had been the ornament of the Maison Rambouillet without affectation of literature, she now became that of Port-Royal without mixing herself with the Jansenist quarrel. It was in vain that Louis XIV. endeavoured to persuade her back to the court, "afin," as he said, "d'y rétablir la dignité et la grandeur qu'on commence à ne plus y voir." She led a life of active and unpretentious piety until 1691, which was the date of her translation from a life of grace to one of glory.

Where else shall we find another like her? Rachel Lady Russell, her contemporary, was nearer to her than any other we remember; an additional example in confirmation of the remark that nature is fond of bringing forth extraordinary persons in pairs; but Lady Russell seems to have had neither that magnificent physique, nor those splendid opportunities, which confer such a grand and full perfection on the picture of Madame de Hautefort. Do what we will with our understandings and moral principles, we can never make puritans of our tastes; and however the mind may cry *peccavi* for its preference, of two beautiful natures it always will prefer that which goes the most gloriously clad. Neither will the feelings accept potentialities for actualities. Lady Russell, in Madame de Hautefort's circumstances, almost certainly would have been no less noble; nay, it is more than likely that she would have avoided Madame de Hautefort's one mistake, which seems to have been an unnecessarily plain-spoken way towards

those who happened to have the power of resenting it with overwhelming effect. As it was, however, Lady Russell's opportunities were limited ; and so France is left to boast the production of the most imposingly noble woman with whom history has made us acquainted.

We are aware that many of our readers will altogether dispute the principles by which we are induced to attribute such an eminence to a woman who was nothing more than a woman, holding the old orthodox rank of the "weaker vessel," and *as such* claiming peculiar honour; who was too much attached to her friends ever to soar quite out of the region of personalities; whose virtues were never startling, being all strung like pearls upon the silken thread of *propriety*; who was not without that amiable vanity which enhances our admiration by seeming not ungrateful for it; who, in fine, though virtuous and heroic when occasion required, was at all times and on all occasions nothing so much as womanly. Many others have been as virtuous, as beautiful, and as heroic; but none else has in an equal degree glorified these perfections by such an attractive radiance of *womanhood*,—that mysterious influence, which we can describe only by negatives and contradictions; that charming subordination, which affects us less as the necessity of a weaker being than as the complaisance of a nature which would rather persuade than command; that flattering inferiority, which allows us the leadership in wisdom, and is content that we should preach, so that it maintains the monopoly of the good example; that ever-present and ever-intangible charm,

whose best praise is that it is the reverse of manhood. Marie de Hautefort has taught us what a woman may be, and what a man may aspire to deserve.

We gladly take the opportunity of repeating, in connexion with her life, what M. Guizot says, in concluding his beautiful essay on Lady Russell, called "*L'Amour dans le Mariage*":

"I have felt profound pleasure in relating the history of this lady, so pure in her passion, always great, and always humble in her greatness, faithful and devoted with equal ardour to her feelings and her duties in grief and joy, in triumph and adversity. Our times are attacked with a deplorable malady; men believe only in the passion which is attended with moral derangement: infinite love, perfect devotion, all ardent, exalted, and soul-mastering sentiments, appear to them impossible within the bounds of moral laws and social conventions; all order seems to them a paralysing yoke, all submission a debasing servitude; no flame is anything if it is not a devouring conflagration. This disease is all the graver because it is not the crisis of a fever, nor the explosion of an exuberant force. It springs from perverse doctrines, from the rejection of law, faith, and superhuman existence, from the idolatry of man, who takes himself for God. And with this disease there is joined another no less lamentable: man not only adores nothing but himself; but even himself he adores only in the multitude where all men are confounded. He hates and envies everything that rises above the vulgar level; all superiority, all individual grandeur, seems to him an iniquity and an injury towards that chaos of undistinguished and



ephemeral beings whom he calls humanity. When he perceives, in the higher walks of society, some great scandal, some odious instance of vice and crime, he rejoices, and ardently turns it to the worst account against social superiorities, making it to be believed that such things are the natural consequences of high birth, great fortune, aristocratic condition. When we have been assailed by these base doctrines, and the shameful passions which gave birth to, or are born from, them; when we have felt the hatefulness of them and measured the peril, it is a very lively delight to meet with one of those noble examples which are their splendid confutation. In proportion as I respect humanity in its totality, I admire and love those glorified images of humanity, which personify and set on high, under visible features and with a proper name, whatever it has of most noble and most pure. Lady Russell gives the soul this beautiful and virtuous joy. *C'est une grande dame chrétienne.*"

If Lady Russell and Madame de Hautefort are splendid and unanswerable replies to vulgar depreciations of aristocracy, they offer no less forcible and illustrious denials of the calumnies on womanhood which with our generation pass for praise. Of all the monstrous births of modern philosophy, surely none is so monstrous, so marked with *moral* ignorance and deterioration, as the doctrine of the equality of man and woman, in the form in which it is at present widely preached. No woman, who has read the fore-<sup>v</sup>going pages, will suspect me of desiring to derogate from her honour; and, indeed, my indignation is, not so much because the doctrine in point diminishes the



honour of man, as because it sullies by misrepresenting that of his gentle ally. Surely she has points of superiority enough, without disputing the sole points which we and nature deny to her—namely, wisdom for the legislative, and force for the executive, in life. Well aware that we really abuse what we overrate, we yet deliberately admit an excellency of nature in woman which puts to the blush the best results of grace in man. Her superiority to man in that wherein he most excels the beasts, religion; his physical inferiority to her in almost everything but that in which the beasts excel him, strength; the only virtue in which she does not share being that in which they do, physical courage; her far greater readiness to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; her infinite versatility, which caused an old writer to say: “Sing of the nature of woman, and then the song shall be surely full of varieties, old crotchets, and most sweet closes,—it shall be humour grave, fantastic, loving, melancholy, sprightly, one in all and all in one”; her beauty, which is love visible, which purifies our passions in exciting them, and makes our desires glow like sunny clouds in the sky of a pure conscience; her voice, which is audible benevolence; her manner, a miracle of lovely tact, and candour subtly-paced as guile;—these and other praises, which would exhaust us long before we exhausted them, are surely enough to countervalue that poor predominance of power with which the brain and muscles of man are indefeasibly endowed, and which force kingship upon him in the very teeth of his false philosophy. The happiness and dignity of man and

woman require, not a confusion, but a complete distinction, of their relations ; and the title of the "weaker vessel," being, on the best authority, the woman's peculiar title to honour, is not to be forgotten and ignored, but to be contemplated and loved. Only thus can their absolutely infinite capability of being mutually exalted come in to effect. They are like the two plates of the philosophical instrument called the electrical doubler, which by mutual opposition under proper circumstances indefinitely intensify their contrasted conditions : her softness, delicacy, tenderness, compliance, fear, and confidence, opposed to whatever strength, courage, gravity, firmness, dignity, and originality there may have been in him before, render a certain exaltation of these virtues, for her sake, easy ; every such exaltation upon his part induces in her a more passionate submission, whereby her peculiar qualities are correspondingly developed ; and every such increment of loving and intelligent self-devotion calls upon him, in turn, for the delightful exercise of a higher degree of manhood, in order that he may deserve it. How hopeful would be that reform which should begin where life begins, in the relation of the sexes ! How hopeless all reforms which attempt to clear the social current anywhere but at its source ! There are certain moral processes which seem to be antecedent to religion. St. Paul tells us that the man who does not provide for those of his own household has not only denied the faith, but "*is worse than an infidel*"; and religion does not so much teach as assume a knowledge of the primary *facts* of nature, which those, who in our day are worse than infidels,

represent as *doctrines*, in order that it may be possible to deny them. The family titles are those by which God reveals His relation to us and ours to Him; and to misinterpret them is to obscure revelation in its very terms. The human affections are the living figures by which we are to be taught to comprehend and feel those which are divine. The performance of natural duties, and the possession of natural knowledge constitute and indicate that "honest and good heart," which we are told is not the fruit of the seed of faith, but the ground in which it must be sown, in order to come to perfection. Now the relation of man and woman, besides being the first and strongest of human ties, is the source from which they all spring; and a miscomprehension of the nature of the primary relation necessarily involves error in the understanding of those which are derivative.

## XXI

### A SPANISH NOVELETTE

M R. GOSSE is doing useful work in editing a series of translations of remarkable foreign novels, most of which are little known to English readers. To persons—the most of us—whose knowledge of Spanish books is confined to *Don Quixote*, *Pepita Jiménez* will come as a complete and delightful surprise; and yet not only is it, as Mr. Gosse says, “the typical Spanish novel of our days,” but it is typical of a great and altogether unique national literature. Though Juan Valera’s personality differs from the priestly character of Calderon as far as may well be, since he is said to have made himself “conspicuous by his *bonnes fortunes*, his wild freaks at the gaming-table, his crazy escapades, his feats of horsemanship, and his powers as a toreador,” the very same distinguishing vein which makes such plays as Calderon’s *Life is a Dream*, and *The Wonder-working Magician* the astonishment and delight of every reader who comes upon them for the first time—an astonishment and delight almost like that of the acquisition of a new sense—this very same vein sparkles through and vivifies the modern novel *Pepita Jiménez*. Alike in Calderon and in this work of Juan Valera we find

that complete synthesis of gravity of matter and gaiety of manner which is the glittering crown of art, and which out of Spanish literature is to be found only in Shakespeare, and even in him in a far less obvious degree. It is only in Spanish literature, with the one exception of Dante, that religion and art are discovered to be not necessarily hostile powers; and it is in Spanish literature only, and without any exception, that ~~gaiety of life is made to appear~~ as being not only compatible with, but the very flower of that root which in the best works of other literatures hides itself in the earth, and only sends its concealed sap through stem and leaf of human duty and desire. The reason of this great and admirable singularity seems mainly to have been the singular aspect of most of the best Spanish minds towards religion. With them, religion has been, as it was meant to be, a human passion; they have regarded dogma as the form of realisable, and, by them, realised experience, and the natural instincts of humanity as the outlines of the lineaments of the Divinity—"very God and very man." Witness the writings of their greatest Saints and theologians, in which dogma is, as it were, fused in, and becomes, psychology, instead of remaining, as it has done with us, a rock, indeed, of refuge to many, but a rock of stumbling and offence to many more, and of these especially such as have been endowed with the artistic temperament.

*Pépita Jiménez* is essentially a "religious novel"; none the less so because it represents the failure of a good young aspirant to the priesthood to attain a degree of sanctity to which he was not called, and

depicts the working in his aspirations of a pride so subtle as to be very venial, though, in some degree, disastrous. Mr. Gosse seems to me to mistake the *motif* of the novel entirely in regarding it as representing the *necessary* failure of a "divine ardour brought face to face with an earthly love." It represents nothing but the exceedingly common mistake of young and ardent minds in measuring their present capacity by their desires, and striving to take their station on the top of an alp, when they are only fit for the ascent of a very moderate hill. One of the many points in which Catholic philosophy shows itself superior to the philosophy of Protestant religionists in the knowledge of the human mind is its distinct recognition of the fact that there are as many degrees of human capacity for holiness as for any other kind of eminence, and that for most men a very moderate degree of spirituality is the utmost for which they are entitled to hope. An ardent Protestant, misinterpreting the words, "Be ye perfect as I am perfect," is apt to think that he is nothing if not a Saint, whereas Juan Valera knew that to be a Saint, as to be a poet is to be about one in twenty millions, and he has made a very amusing as well as a very useful book out of the vain strivings of his hero for—

" Heroic good, target for which the young  
Dream in their dreams that every bow is strung ;"

and the course of experience by which he is brought to conclude—

" That less than highest is good, and may be high."

That disgusting abortion, the English "religious novel," would have made the enthusiastic young deacon relapse into despair and profligacy, instead of letting him marry the pretty girl who had turned him from his supposed "vocation," and who thereafter caused him to live an exemplary, conscientious, and religious life as a country gentleman, and farmer of his own land.

There is plenty of "analysis" in the English religious novel, but no psychology; and analysis which has not psychological knowledge for its material is merely the anatomy of a corpse, and fails as completely in illustrating and extending knowledge of life as the anatomy of the body has confessedly failed, from the time of Galen and Hippocrates, in explaining the vivifying powers of nature. Psychology comes naturally to the typical Spanish mind, for the reasons given above. It deals with the personal relationships of the soul with the personalities which are above the soul, from which the soul exists, and of which the soul is the express mirror; but of these personal relationships, which every religion confesses, the modern mind, out of Spain, *knows* comparatively little, though, thanks to the works of St. John of the Cross (two editions of which have lately appeared in England), and of certain other works, magnificent as literature as well as for burning psychological insight, the study of true psychology, vulgarly called "mysticism" and "transcendentalism" (what good thing is not "mystic" and "transcendental" to the modern "scientist" and his pupils?), shows signs of revival in Europe generally.



A most important consequence of the human character of Spanish faith, a character manifest alike in the religious philosophy of the times of Calderon and of those of Juan Valera, is the utter absence of the deadly Manicheism, which is the source of modern "nicety" in that portion of literature and art which does not profess, like French, and, in great part, American literature and art, to have abandoned all faith and real decency. Calderon, in works which glitter with an incomparable purity, is more plain-spoken, when need be, than Shakespeare, and constantly exalts the splendour of that purity in his main theme by a by-play of inferior characters which is as gay and "coarse" as anything in *Othello* or *Romeo and Juliet*; and though Juan Valera in this novel conforms in the main to the daintiness of the fashion, there is a freedom in his story from the cant of Manichean purity which will certainly limit the number of his readers among ourselves, and probably give some scandal to the most "serious" among those—the immense majority of our countrymen and women—who do not really believe that God made all things pure, and that impurity is nothing but the abuse of that which is pure, and that such abuse is impure in proportion to the purity perverted.

In consequence of the characteristics I have endeavoured to indicate, this novel, though expressly "religious" in its main theme and most of its details, is as "natural," concrete, and wholesomely human and humanly interesting as one of Sir Walter Scott's. There is in it no sense of dislocation or incompatibility between the natural and the spiritual. From

the dainty, naive, innocently coquettish, and passionate Pepita, who is enraged by her lover's pretensions to a piety which, though she is devoted to her beautifully adorned "Infant Jesus," she cannot understand, and in which she sees only an obstacle to the fulfilment of her love for him, to the saintly ecclesiastic, who, almost from the first, sees the incapacity of his pupil, Don Luis, for the celibate heights to which he aspires, but who understands life in all its grades too well to look upon his strivings and his "fall," as Don Luis at first esteems it, with other than a good-humoured smile, all is upon one easy ascending plane and has an intelligible unity. Valera has taken no less care with and interest in the subordinate characters than the principals in the story. They are all true and vivid and unique in their several ways, and we have the most complete picture of a very foreign world without the slightest drawback of strangeness or want of verisimilitude.

## XXII

### ON OBSCURE BOOKS

THE next best thing to understanding an obscure matter, and the first and most necessary step towards understanding it, is to know that you do not understand it, waiving for a time and in your own respect the popular and pleasant assumption that everything in which there is anything to be understood can be understood by everybody and at once. The threadbare saying, "If you do not understand a man's ignorance, you should think yourself ignorant of his understanding," should be cherished by every reader who does not read merely to pass the time. Active, intelligent, and modest minds are able, in most cases, to discover at a glance whether the obscurity of a book is due to the author's ignorance or their own; but, unhappily, such minds are rare; and the consequence is that most of the great books of the world rest unread upon the dusty bookshelves of our big libraries. "What is the use of reading books which, perhaps, we could not understand, if we tried ever so much? And what a bore it would be to learn to understand them if we could," is the remark that will naturally occur. But the fact is that the obscure works of great writers are never wholly obscure,

unless they are purely technical and scientific; and that the little which may easily be understood in them is generally sweeter and brighter than all the sweetness and light of many a perfectly intelligible and widely popular author.

Nor is the reading the less pleasant to any one who seeks more in reading than the merest amusement, because the way is somewhat rough, and there may be great boulders or even craggy hills which he must avoid and go round instead of over. The way often sparkles with gems of forgotten novelty, and it is the most agreeable of surprises to find how many problems which agitate the contemporary heart have been settled once and for ever, hundreds or thousands of years ago. You may not understand one-tenth of a treatise by Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Swedenborg, or Hegel; but what you do comprehend remains engraved in your memory like a precious intaglio, and you find that you have been learning *things* and not listening to gossip *about* things. Then there is the pleasure—always great to an active mind—of being active. You have to ask yourself at every step whether you have rightly understood; and, whether you concur or not, the novelty of style excites your intelligence, instead of laying it to sleep, as the smooth conventional language of the day often does, so that you think you understand when you do not, or when, perhaps, there has been nothing to understand. Again, the often hopeless obscurities of some passages throw the clearer parts into such splendid clearness! How delightful to find in Plato, among a good deal from which the light has, perhaps, for ever departed, a

political passage, long, clear, forcible, and as *à propos* as if it had been written yesterday by a supernaturally vigorous correspondent of the *Times*. Nor is the reading of the authors of great exploded systems of philosophy to be neglected. Though erroneous as well as obscure, the errors of great original thinkers are commonly related in a more living manner to truth than the commonplaces and pretentious *réchauffés* of the present day; and, in the course of proving what may now seem, or may really be, an absurd proposition, they often scatter about them many sparks of living truth, any one of which might suffice for the theme about which a nineteenth-century writer might talk profoundly through sixteen pages of a first-class periodical. Even from a far less elevated point of view than that of the true student, the reading of such books is in its results profitable and delightful. If you want to shine as a diner-out, the best way is to know something which others do not know, and not to know many things which everybody knows. This takes much less reading, and is doubly effective, inasmuch as it makes you a really good, that is, an interested listener, as well as a talker. Your neighbour at the board can tell you what the *Times* or the *Contemporary Review*, which you have not read, says about the matter, and you can supplement the information by something on the subject from Hobbes or Hooker; and each converses with the pleasant sense of being superior to the other, and able to instruct him.

But to return to the point of view of the student, there is no more agreeable result of reading such books as we are treating of than that of gradually discovering

that great Doctors of the Church, schoolmen, mystics, and others were not such idiots as we fancied we were bound to believe them to have been, and as, indeed, such elegant extracts as are all that is known of them by most enlightened persons may seem to prove them to have been. Such passages may appear to be not obscure, but very clear nonsense, and may seem to imply, if we know no more, that these writers could not possibly write sensibly on anything. But the result of a direct and considerate acquaintance with their books themselves may be the discovery of quite simple explanations of such seemingly hopeless anomalies; for example, the strange traditional practice which prevailed among the schoolmen, and prevails in some theological schools even in the present day, of confirming a thesis by some brief and quite inconclusive argument or authority, and then going on with the real proof in the body of the chapter or article, is the clue to the existence of many most amusing demonstrations of the imbecility of men who have won immortal names for their learning and sagacity. But perhaps the greatest of all the advantages of this sort of reading is the advantage of keeping company with the intellectually great, apart from any specific and tangible acquisition of knowledge. Great authors are always greater than their books. The best part of the best play of Shakespeare is Shakespeare himself, the vast, wholesome, serene, and unique individuality which stands above and breathes through tragedy and comedy alike. Fortunately, the most ordinary education implies contact with several of these primary spheres of benign influence; but

there are many others, totally different in character, which might be approached with the same kind of benefit by the general student, but scarcely ever are. Of course, the principal excuse for this is that many or most such works as we are contemplating are in some language which the ordinary reader—though he may have been at a public school and University—cannot comfortably read. But this excuse is insufficient. The best writers, even the best poets, bear translation best; and unless a man can read Greek comfortably, which is really an exceedingly rare accomplishment, or can peruse Latin freely, which is not at all a common acquirement even among the most expensively educated, he will get much more of the author's thought by handling fairly good translations than by consulting originals, of which the inherent obscurity may be quite sufficient for his patience.



## XXIII

### SHALL SMITH HAVE A STATUE ?

THE modern practice of sending the hat round for money to set up in the Abbey or elsewhere a statue, or at least a bust, of Smith, during or immediately after his lifetime, in grateful remembrance of the service or pleasure he may have done us, can rarely be indulged without danger of making him and ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of our children—or even in our own, should we survive for a few years the amiable folly of having raised an abiding memorial of our possibly transient enthusiasm. There could have been no doubt of the propriety of setting up a statue to the Duke of Wellington after Waterloo, however much there may reasonably have been about the propriety of the statue itself which the ladies of England dedicated to the hero. But even in the case of such obvious and measurable merits as those of warriors it is best not to be in a hurry. Historical criticism has discovered that the credit of great battles and even campaigns has not always been rightly due to the commanders-in-chief. Again, improvements like those of the steam jet, by which it became at once possible to raise the rate of railway travelling from under ten to over fifty miles an hour, the penny post, and the electric telegraph, are

certainly matters for permanent memorials, provided that they are raised to the right men. But improvements and inventions of this magnitude scarcely ever are, in the first instance, attributed to the right men, who are generally more or less obscure and unrewarded geniuses. It is the practical man, who has the quickness to see the money value of a great invention and the means of removing the last external hindrance to its popular use, that gets the statue, and the money too. Few would envy him the latter; but it is cruel to him no less than to ourselves to be in such haste to decorate him with a laurel crown, which the touch of time may change into a fool's cap. Again, unless statues are due to good intentions ardently prosecuted without reference to results, we ought to be very careful how we impose immortality upon great philanthropists and humanitarians. It would not have been for the abiding happiness and honour of the two eminent prelates and the able editor who lately constituted themselves high commissioners of public morality, to have had their images set up in Hyde Park back to back, like the figure of Hecate Triformis, and so to have been forbidden eternally to blush unseen, as no doubt they now desire to do. It would be prudent, also, to wait a while before conferring diplomas of immortality upon the heroes of legislation. The fame of repealers of navigation laws and founders of household franchise should be considered as in a state of pupillage for at least fifty years; and they should not be allowed to sport bronze thighs and the *toga virilis* before the public buildings or in the squares of the metropolis, ere the paper on which their Bills are

printed is well dry. It should be remembered that, in our haste, we may be placing an awful and easy vengeance in the hands of posterity ; which might choose, not to pull down such monuments, but—to let them stand.

But of all modes of premature insistence upon the verdict of fame, the one which is most to be avoided, if we would avoid making ourselves unnecessarily absurd, is that of decreeing immortality during or soon after their lifetime to literary men and artists. If, indeed, there existed academies of art and literature, which should consist of all the best men of their kind, all actuated by the most disinterested appreciation of merit not their own in their own profession, then we might have some approximation—but only an approximation—to a safe tribunal ; and if Smith and his friends were such boobies as to want the cake of fame before it was baked, Smith might be “busted up” in the Abbey, or obtain a parliamentary guarantee of being puff-worthy, in his own day or immediately after, with little more to be said against it than that it was a want of decorum, all the more disgusting on account of the dignity of the occasion and the absence of any call for hurry. But, as no such academy could exist, or, if it existed, could make its decrees prevail with those who are the decreers of statues, how does the matter stand ? A man who has done his best, perhaps, to give us harmless amusement, and whose only crime is that of having succeeded too well in adapting himself to the poor capacities and passing moods of his present audience, is now in such danger as he never was in at any former time of finding him-

self rewarded with ten thousand per annum here and an eternity of contempt hereafter.

If persons of culture and natural taste have often to confess that the muse of a painter, a poet, or a novelist—whose muse was the seemingly faultless mistress of his affections five-and-twenty years ago—now stands before him as a false Duessa, what should we think of the right to raise monuments claimed by that public which is as changeable in its tastes as it is liberal in paying for their indulgence? Yet it is this public that is venturing more and more audaciously to anticipate the verdict of time. True, it often uses a Minister or a committee of experts as its agent, councillor, and representative; but it is none the safer for that. If the agents themselves know better, they know the value of their own popularity too well to say so; or they may have a secret grudge against Smith, and so cry “Ay” with all their hearts when the people ask, “Shall Smith have a statue?”

## XXIV

### IDEAL AND MATERIAL GREATNESS IN ARCHITECTURE

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS writes, "Great riches are not required for the habit of magnificence ; it is enough that a man should dispose of such as he possesses greatly, according to time and place." As in life, so in art, and especially in architecture, greatness of style is quite independent of wealth of material ; indeed, wealth of material is constantly found by true artists to be a fatal hindrance to grandeur of effect. Hence great poets and painters are usually very shy of what commonly pass for great subjects—that is, subjects full of obvious interest and splendour ; and, if they treat such subjects at all, they begin by denuding them as far as possible of all that makes them attractive to the novice in art, until they come to a simple greatness which was hitherto a secret.

Now I wish to point out what I conceive to be a principal condition of great effect with small means and in small or comparatively small buildings. It is magnificence in the expenditure of such material as the architect possesses, and especially of stone, brick, and timber. It is commonly supposed, even by architects, that a solidity of wall and roof sufficient to put far out of sight any idea of insecurity or decay, if properly

shown forth and expressed by chamfer, moulding, cornice, shafted recess, and the many other "decorations" which are principally methods of showing the thickness of wall and weight of roof, is all that noble building calls for; and that the frequent—nay, general—practice of ancient architecture in going much further than this was simply waste of material caused by want of mechanical knowledge. But those who know most of ancient architecture know best that there was no want of mechanical knowledge displayed in it, but quite the reverse. Not only is mechanical knowledge, equal to if not beyond our own, proved by such buildings as York and Salisbury Cathedrals, but the house and cottage builder of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seems to have known all the details of his business fully as well as the most ingenious economist of material that ever "scamped" a modern tenement of the same order. He was fully aware that the strength of a joist or rafter lay rather in its depth than in its breadth, and that, for a time at least, a few boards two inches thick and ten inches deep, set edgeways, would suffice to carry the roof, which nevertheless it pleased him better to lay upon a succession of beams ten inches square. It is the reality, and the modest ostentation of the reality, of such superfluous substantiality that constitutes the secret of effect in many an old house that strikes us as "architectural" though it may be almost wholly without architectural ornament; and, in the very few instances in which modern buildings have been raised in the same fashion, the beholder at once feels that their generous regard for the far future is of almost as

poetical a character as the aged retrospect of a similar house of the time of Henry VII or Elizabeth. A man now hires a bit of ground for eighty or ninety years; and, if he has something to spare for spending on beauty, he says to himself: "I will build me a house that will last my time, and what money I have over I will spend in decorating it. Why should I waste my means in raising wall and roof which will last five times as long as I or mine shall want them?" The answer is: Because that very "waste" is the truest and most striking ornament: and though your and your family's usufruct of a house thus magnanimously built may be but a fifth of its natural age, there lies in that very fact an "ornament" of the most noble and touching kind, which will be obvious at all seasons to yourself and every beholder, though the consciousness of its cause may be dormant; whereas the meanness of your own plan will be only the more apparent with every penny you spend in making it meretricious.

I have said that a modest *ostentation* of extreme substantiality is also an element of architectural effect in the kind of building contemplated. This, indeed, is the properly architectural or artistic element. A house will look respectable, and something more than respectable, which has only the reality of being built somewhat better than well. But consciousness is the life of art, and there must be a quiet rejoicing in strength, solidity, and permanence, to give these characters that power over the imagination which a work of art must have. A labourer's cottage or the smallest village church which has this character is an



artistic and rightly architectural work ; and the nobleman's mansion or the cathedral which wants it is not. Here comes in that true "decoration" which scarcely the humblest house of the sixteenth or early part of the seventeenth century was altogether without. In out-of-the-way villages and roadside inns of that period, you will find your attention directed to the thickness and weight of the roof-timbers by a carved or moulded cornice, that measures and expatiates upon the depth and substance of the rafters terminating there ; or one or more of the brackets supporting the joists of the overhanging bedroom floor will have a touch of carving, to declare with what ease and pleasure the burthen is borne upon their sturdy shoulders ; or the lintel of the door will show and boast of the thickness of the wall by a moulded chamfer. A single touch of such decoration glorifies the whole, and puts the living spirit of art into the body of an honest building, however humble it may be.

So far is size from being needful to greatness in architecture, that one of the very grandest pieces of domestic building I ever saw is a little village inn of extremely early date in a Sussex village which scarcely anybody has ever heard of, though it stands but two miles from Berwick Station on the South Coast Railway. This village is Aldfriston. It has in its little market-place an extremely ancient stone cross, far gone in decay, having never been touched by restorer. The whole village has an air of antiquity such as breathes from no other English village I have ever seen ; but older than anything, except the cross, is its hostelry—no bigger than a well-to-do bailiff's cottage,

showing no Elizabethan "variety" in its ground-plan, and the front to the street having but three windows above and one on either side of the doorway. When I came upon it quite unprepared for seeing anything particular in the village, this house fairly took my breath away by its exemplification of the way in which ideal and material greatness differ. It was like coming, in a newspaper article, upon three or four lines of great and unknown poetry. Yet it was nothing but a cottage built mightily, and with a mighty consciousness of being so built. It seems never to have been touched, except here and there by the house-painter, since the date at which it was raised, which was probably in the fifteenth century, the carved foliage in the spandrels of the small arched doorway indicating that period. An architect learned in mouldings might perhaps fix the date to within twenty-five years, from those of the cornice. The bedroom storey projects considerably over the ground-floor, and is borne by great oak brackets, the faces of which are adorned with painted carvings of figures in mitres, one being St. Hubert, as is shown by the stag at his feet. The spaces between these brackets are ceiled with a great plaster "cavetto," which, together with the brackets, springs from a wide timber cornice above the door and windows of the ground-floor. In the hollow of this cornice are four or five grotesque faces, the painting of which, though fresh, seems, like the painting of all the other decorations, to be nothing but the original colouring faithfully transmitted. The three windows of the upper floor are bays, and are carried by great spread brackets, carved

and painted with most curiously quaint and simple representations of St. George and the Dragon and symbols of his tradition, the tails of two dragons in the central bracket running in their extremities into the outlines of a pointed and foliated arch. The roof is covered in with slabs of ragged stone, thick enough for a London pavement. The dimensions of the timbers of the roof are proved inferentially by the fact that the roof-tree has not sagged an inch under some four hundred years of this burthen; and their mass and power are expressed artistically by their termination in a cornice of immense depth, and consisting of a greater number of moulded "members" than I remember to have seen in any other feature of the kind. The walls are plastered in their plain spaces, but indicate their construction of solid oak—which, by the way, is far more durable than either brick or any ordinary stone—by the chance appearance in one place of a strange animal which runs up the face of the wall and is obviously carved out of a beam otherwise hid by the plaster.

There is nothing heavy in the total effect of this extraordinary piece of cottage architecture; for there is artistic animation everywhere, and the expression of its strength is that of living power and not mere passive sufficiency.

To build such a cottage now might cost about three times as much as it does to build a common country inn of the same dimensions. It would not, of course, suit a London citizen so well as a Chiselmurst villa of like size and cost; but it would be a fit abode for a duke in difficulties.

## XXV

### “OLD ENGLISH” ARCHITECTURE, ANCIENT AND MODERN

THE style of architecture in which the great majority of country houses, and very many town houses, from the cottage to the mansion, have been built during the past fifteen years, is a very great improvement upon the nameless mode—for which no better title could be invented than the “factory style”—which prevailed in house architecture during great part of last century and the first half of this. And it is a yet greater improvement upon the falsification of that simple though sordid way of building, by attempting to change its misery into magnificence by “compo” mockeries of stone construction and a style of ornament created to express the thickness of the wall or the weight of roof of a Renaissance palace. Most persons are contented with describing the improved mode as Old English, fancying that it is a real return to the way in which houses were built in the reign of Elizabeth or James or thereabouts. But there is a notable distinction between ancient and modern “Old English.” It is this: the “variety” in form which is of the essence of the last was but the accident of the first. Whitehall and the Parthenon are not more

simply symmetrical in their masses than are many of the finest specimens of Early English domestic architecture; and the "variety" which we moderns suppose we are copying is, in nearly all cases, the result either of change of plan in the process of building, or of subsequent additions by which the original symmetry was sacrificed. That the sacrifice was often without loss, and often even a gain—as such a sacrifice could never be in the case of a Greek or Renaissance building—is owing to the fact that domesticity is the central thought and expression of the one kind of architecture and public ostentation of the other. Accordingly, the keynote of an Early English house is its stack of chimneys, upon which it was considered impossible to lavish too much ornament. From the cottage of the Sussex labourer to the great nobleman's mansion—such as that most exquisite of all existing specimens of Tudor building, "Compton in the Hole"—the chimneys are the things which first attract the eye and delight it longest; whereas the Greek, Roman, or Renaissance house is heartily ashamed of its smoke, and has never yet succeeded thoroughly in dealing with its disgrace. Symmetry, then, in the old country house was looked upon as good; but convenience and comfort, and the expression of convenience and comfort, as better. Now, in a house well and deliberately planned for the convenience of any household, large or small, the ground-plan and elevation will be naturally simple and symmetrical; simplicity, too, is economical, and economy a part of domesticity. Accordingly, the great Tudor mansions and palaces of England, the builders of which could have best

afforded to pay for the supposed charm of "variety," are, for the most part, the simplest in plan and elevation; while it is in the ill-planned and often-added-to village inn or rectory that the vagaries of "variety," so alluring to the modern mind, are almost exclusively found.

In Old English architecture this variety is a very real though accidental beauty. It has the double charm of intensifying the primary expression of domesticity by the very sense of the sacrifice which has been made to it, and of giving the building, however small, a touch of historical character. But what if these beauties of the old architecture are sought to be obtained in the modern by sacrifices of convenience, economy, and domesticity, and by a deliberate planning of structural "after-thoughts," or subsequent necessities, from the beginning! What if a house, full of small and uncomfortable rooms connected, or rather isolated, by mazes of dark staircases, landings, and passages, has been manifestly built at one blow, and at twice the cost at which a simple and symmetrical and scarcely less—nay, to the initiated, more—beautiful house of the same period of architecture might have been built, without the sacrifice of any modern convenience? Surely, if the devil were an architect his "favourite sin" would be this kind of "cottage of gentility."

The "variety" of a real Old English house not only is nearly always the outcome of some convenience or necessity discovered or arising after the first building of it, but is nearly always obviously so. Some little difference of style not too great to break harmony,



will indicate a difference of date; or it will be shown by some infraction of the lines of the original building. The library or parlour which cuts off a return of the label of the pantry window is manifestly an addition. But it would be too ridiculous to copy such proofs of accident and alteration into a nineteenth-century rectory, villa, or mansion; and the consequence is, that to an understanding eye its variety is often in appearance, as it is in reality, mere imbecility aping the movements of reason.

There is no real anachronism in the revival of the ordinary details of Old English house architecture, though there is sometimes in that of the material. The "half-timbered" wall belongs only to times and places in which bricks and tiles are not to be had, and in which abundance of the best oak timber is. But hooded gables, deep cornices, bracketed bays, weather-tiled walls, the projection of upper over lower storeys, and almost all the other charming features of the mode, have sound reasons of use which hold as good now as they did in the year 1600; and in these reasons alone consists their architectural charm. The characteristic Old English chimney—the most ornamental feature of the style—has its full justification in use; the loading of the top with projecting layer after layer of bricks, laid even or notch-wise, forming that security against hurricane so often sought, in the "factory" style, by the one or more long iron rods which agreeably break the sky-line of many modern mansions. Even the scalloped tile, which so often replaces the square in old weather-tiled walls, has its utilitarian purpose—a saving of material; the greatest breadth of the



scallop being superposed upon the juncture of the tile below, so as to protect it from wet. The projection, in a long low house of the modest rectory or farmhouse type, of the bedroom storey over the basement is the feature farthest of all from being merely ornamental. In such a house more space was usually wanted for bedrooms than for living-rooms and offices, and a very moderate projection of the upper storey supplies this additional space.

## XXVI

### ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

#### I

EVERY one has a perfectly definite impression of what is meant by an architectural style; and would recognise a building as Egyptian, Greek, Ecclesiastical, Gothic, Norman, or Moresque, not merely by the characteristic details of each of these manners, but still more by a perfectly distinct character attained in each manner by the combination of those details—a character which is totally different from any effect that could result from any such random though more or less constant collocation of details as is to be found, for example, in the bastard “Italian Gothic.” This, though it was made popular by Mr. Ruskin, has about as much relation to a true style as a curiosity-shop has to a well-ordered living-room. It is a remarkable fact, and one especially worth dwelling upon in this context, that Italy, the country of the arts, never had an architecture, and could never even adopt one from its neighbours without degrading or abolishing its character as a style. The so-called “Romanesque” was an incongruous hybrid until it was developed into the “Norman” by the northern

nations of Europe ; and though the pointed arch made its appearance in Italy very early, no Italian architect ever seems to have had any perception of its artistic capacity, even when he adopted in his buildings the constructive system to which that feature belonged. Italy had great architects, but no great architecture. Buildings like St. Mark's, the Doge's Palace, the Duomo of Florence, etc., owe their influence upon the imagination to the personality of the architect, which has known how to impress itself on a combination of in themselves unmeaning or incongruous forms, rather than to that imaginative integrity of style which makes every Old English parish church look as if the Spirit had builded its own house. Every great architect—like every great poet, painter, or musician—has his own style, whether he works on the lines of a great integral style like the Northern Pointed, or in a mongrel mode like that of the Romanesque, or in no accepted manner at all. Sir Christopher Wren could not build a common brick house without imposing his own character upon it. But this personal character or style, which always marks the work of the great artist, is usually almost beyond the power of analysis ; and, were it otherwise, would scarcely be worth the trouble of analysis, which would only serve the purpose of encouraging imitations of that which owes its value to its unique individuality.

The five styles above named—*i.e.* the Egyptian, the Greek, the Pointed Gothic, the Norman, and the Moresque—are so much distinguished from all other modes of building by the integrity with which a single

idea is carried out in every detail, that in comparison with them there is no other manner which deserves to be called a style. And it is hard to conjecture the possibility of the development in the future of any sixth style which shall deserve to rank with them; for these five seem to have exhausted the five possible modes in which weight or mass of material—apparently the foundations of all architectural expression—can be treated. Two of these styles, the Norman and the Moresque, though equal to the others in artistic integrity, are immeasurably inferior to them in significance; the first three having dealt with and exhausted the only modes in which the primary fact of weight of material in stone construction can be subordinated to religious expression, and the field itself of religious expression in architecture having been in like manner cleared by these styles: for when the Material, the Rational, and the Spiritual have once found utterance in stone—as they have done in the temple-architectures of Egypt, Greece, and Northern Europe—what fourth religious aspect remains to inspire a new art?

It is proposed in this paper to consider the several expressional themes of the five great architectures, and to give a brief exposition of the way in which they are worked out. It should be premised, however, that as it does not require a knowledge of how an effect is produced in order to feel that effect, so it is not pretended that any very distinct consciousness of the adaptation of means to expressional ends must have existed in the minds of the inventors of the great styles of architecture. All artistic production

involves a large element of lucky accident, of which the true artist alone knows how to avail himself; and it is often from a lucky accident in a happy season that a great work or a great art will take its origin, as the dropping of a grain of sand into a saturated solution of certain salts will form the centre and cause of its sudden crystallisation. As sound philosophy is only sound sense spread out, so true criticism of great work is only right perception spread out; and the use of criticism of such work is not so much to teach men to enjoy it, as to enable them to pronounce a prompt and assured and demonstrable condemnation of bad or inferior work when false or exaggerated claims are put forth in its favour.

The three primary architectures seem to have owed their origin to three accidents. The immense and wholly unreasonable massiveness which characterises the Egyptian style is probably due to its having emerged from caverns. It carried into the air its memory of having had the rocky earth for its roof and walls, and of the time when its close-packed squadrons of granite shafts were a necessity which it cost nothing to provide. The Parthenon, again, is a manifest glorification in stone of the forms of the wooden hut; and the pointed arch, with all its immense consequences, arose from the constructional accident of cross-vaulting.

Weight, then, which is the most general and characteristic attribute of matter, was taken by the Egyptian, Greek, and Gothic architects as the ground of their several ideas—whether consciously or not, is no concern of ours. The Egyptian architect, as will

be shown, subordinated every detail, from the mass of the pyramid—which may be regarded as the form taken by weight in the abstract—down to almost every particular of decoration, to the creation of an effect of compulsory submission to an irresistible and for-ever-enduring material power. The mightiest bulk of Alp or Apennine is a bubble compared with an Egyptian temple, which is the awful *life* of ponderosity and crushing earthliness; and there is no need to pause in order to point out how aptly this expression suited the political and religious character of the people out of whom Israel fled.

In the architecture of Greece, weight—representative of material force—was still the theme; but it was material force which had met with its match, the force of mind; and the ponderous entablature, every detail of which expresses weight, is lifted and borne beautifully in air by a series of members every one of which conveys the impression of an opposite ascendant force recognising but not suffering in the least degree from its burthen, beneath which the animated shaft is seen to fling away a part of its supporting power just at the point where most weight is born, and the Caryatides of the Pandrosium can afford to stand with one knee bent easily forward. Here, then, again was a great and new phase of the human mind envisaging the universe, expressed by simple reference to weight of material in its temples.

The third great phase—that in which an ascetic spirituality, refusing all willing alliance with earthliness, recognises it only as a thing to be defied and to be made the measure of the spirit's predominance—

obtained its artistic expression by employing material weight as the symbol of its opponent; which it neither suffers from nor enters into alliance with, but vanquishes, converts, and glorifies in ascending streams of life.

The Moresque style also owes its singular integrity of effect to a peculiar mode of regarding the idea of gravitation; if that can be called a mode of regarding it which consists in a most ingenious and fanciful ignoring of it, either as an oppressor, an ally, or a vanquished foe. The honeycombed domes of the Alhambra and the Mosque of Cordova hang apparently suspended in air upon "pendentives," like sunny clouds in station; and the astonishing art by which innumerable details are made to concur in this effect would justify this style in ranking with the three foregoing, had this effect any symbolic meaning for the human race and its religions; but it has no meaning for men who have their feet upon the earth, and is only adapted for the palaces and temples of a race of sylphs or gnomes.

Lastly, the Norman style, though no less consistent an exponent of one idea than are the other temple styles, is founded upon no reference to superincumbent weight, but depends almost wholly upon its boast of the mass and eternal stability of the wall. It well conveys the solemn expression of a calm eternity of time; but for religious purposes it will not bear the least comparison with the flamelike Gothic, expressing at once the peace and ardour of the "eternal moment."

In the following pages a short analysis will be



given of the somewhat obscure means by which the obvious expressions of these five great architectures are obtained.

## II

The symbolisation of material life and power by an elaborately artistic treatment of the mere fact of weight, which is the most universal and conspicuous attribute of matter, is the object of every general form and of almost every, so-called decorative, detail of Egyptian architecture ; the few exceptions, such as the occasional intrusion of the lotus and palm into the capitals of the columns, being due to an obscure but probably intimately related symbolism of a different kind.

The pyramid is the simplest artistic form by which mere weight can be expressed. It is nothing more nor less than a mound or mountain shaped so as to give it an artistic consciousness. The form of the Egyptian Temple is nothing but the expression of this elementary form of weight with emphasis upon emphasis, until there results such an accumulation and concentration of the idea of weight that the whole building seems as if it would crush the earth on which it stands. This effect is mainly produced by a multiplication of the pyramidal form in the masses of the building ; by its truncation at various heights, which introduces the powerful element of suggestion ; by numerous inferior members which emphasise the expression by contrast ; and by such a multiplication and formation of shaft and capital as to convey the idea of an overwhelming burthen above them. The great

double-towered Propylon of the typical Egyptian Temple, is, in its entire mass, a truncated pyramid; and, as simply such, is a much more forcible expression of pyramidal form than the pyramid itself. This expression is doubled by the division of the upper part of the mass into two low towers. Immense *cavetto* cornices crown these towers, and intensify their effect by the strongest contrast. Their pyramidal outline is emphasised to the eye by the great roll-mouldings which follow the angles of the masonry from summit to base. Finally, the plane of the great doorway by which the two masses of the Propylon are joined leaves that of the pyramidal mass and becomes nearly perpendicular, while the sides of the doorway become actually perpendicular—constituting a *cumulative* contrast which seems to double the already manifold emphasis of the main bulk of the building. The comparatively low mass of the body of the temple behind the Propylon is still the truncated pyramid crowned with the contrasting cornice; but the truncation occurs so near the ground, and so far from what would be the apex were the converging lines of wall continued upwards, that the pyramidal form would scarcely have been suggested, were it not for its plainer manifestation in the Propylon; but, with this aid, the eye at once catches the idea of the decapitated pyramid throughout. Through openings in these strongly inclined walls appeared the vertical colonnades; and such niches or apertures as were practised in these walls had the contrast of perpendicular jambs. In front of the vast ponderosity of the Egyptian Temple rose the final and most effective contrast to the whole

—the “fingers of the sun”: the pair of tall and slender monoliths, which only tapered sufficiently to give them the reality and the appearance of security. In the interior of the building the idea of weight had to be conveyed in a different manner—namely, by the bulk, number, and form of the columns. Every detail of shaft and capital—with the two or three exceptions already spoken of—was calculated to express actual sufferance from the burthen borne by them. The shafts bulge towards the base, and the capitals likewise swell as they approach their juncture with the shafts; shaft and capital being usually clothed with vertical convex mouldings: the exact reverse of the Doric shaft, which, as will be shown, had exactly the opposite idea to convey. Unlike the repose and sufficiency of the Doric column, the Egyptian expresses violent and yet insufficient energy, which seems to rush towards and to be partially driven back by the entablature. The immense thickness of wall, wherever it was shown, was emphasised by sculpture in very low relief. These are only the main elements of an effect which, and the means of producing which, will be more forcibly felt by a corresponding analysis of Greek architecture culminating in the Doric of the Parthenon.

This temple has a double basement, the first of which is on a “dead level”; from this rises the second basement, in which the true life of the building commences. In 1837 Mr. Pennethorne announced the important discovery that the lines of this basement, together with those of the entablature, are not horizontal lines, but parabolic curves; and Mr. Penrose, in 1852, in a work published by the Society of Dilet-

tanti, gave the actual measurements of these curves ; which are found to prevail not only in the horizontal but in all the vertical lines and faces, in the inclined lines of the pediment, and in the axes of the shafts. These curves are so subtle—the rise being only an inch or two in as many hundred feet—that they are rather felt than seen ; but that they are felt, even by the comparatively gross modern eye, is clear enough from the different way in which it is affected by the Parthenon itself and by any imitation of it by modern builders. It is probable that these curves were in some instances meant to correct optical illusions, by which straight lines would look hollow, etc. ; but a far greater motive for their introduction was an effect of animation in the whole and in every part and of unity through the predominance of general curves, which a cultivated eye can discern very easily, but which is probably beyond our present powers of analysis. Above the basement the Doric Temple externally—and the Greek Temple's architectural beauty is all outside—consists of two parts, of opposite and exactly balanced significance. The first consists of a colonnade of shafts, each of which rises at once from the stylobate, without the footing or “base” found in subsequent styles. The shaft diminishes somewhat rapidly, until it impinges upon and ends in the capital ; which is an hyperbolic “ovolo,” spreading widely under the “abacus” or tile, which constitutes the neutral point, or point of rest, between the column and the entablature. The outlines of the shaft (always fluted in early Greek architecture) converge from the base towards the capital—not in straight

lines, but in decided parabolic curves, of which the departure from straight lines is greatest at about two-thirds of the height of the shaft. This curve of the shaft is called the *entasis*; and upon it depends mainly the expressional life of the shaft. It will be remembered that there is a similar swelling in the Egyptian shaft; but this is where it approaches the base. Its position in the Greek shaft expresses an ascendant energy of force, which is manifested most strongly as it approaches the capital. In the one case yielding under weight is expressed, in the other superabundant power. This animated expression is multiplied by every multiplication of the outline provided by the flutings, which in the Greek shaft are concave, expressing concentration of force towards the centre; whereas, in the Egyptian the flutings are convex, expressing further a tendency to bulge and burst under their burthen. A little under the capital, and just where the Greek shaft is thinnest, one or more deep channels are incised in its substance, showing that power can be triumphantly cast away just where power is most needed. The Egyptian shaft, at the same point, is usually bound with a heavy thonglike moulding, as if to prevent it from being crushed. The ovolo, which constitutes the Doric capital, provides and expresses the distribution of the power of the shaft to meet the superincumbent entablature; and the "quirk" or sudden diminution of its breadth immediately under the abacus is a repetition of the device of the incised channels for proving the existence of superabundant power. At the point where the Greek entablature is met with easy grace by the

noble spread of the hyperbolic ovolo, the Egyptian capital, as a rule, diminishes and seems to dash itself with violence towards the point of conflict.

As every feature of the column thus expresses cheerful and abundant energy, every detail of the entablature is a mode of expressing the weight which is thus met and carried with such graceful power. The Doric entablature is made up of three parts—architrave, frieze, and cornice—each expressing in a different manner the idea of weight. The architrave is a massive layer of stone with its face unbroken by any sort of “decoration”; it projects beyond the neck of the shaft, so that a line dropped from it would about touch the outer circumference of the shaft at its base. In this member, then, weight is expressed by a simple mass directly imposed upon the centres of support. The frieze is a similar layer of masonry having its face broken up by triglyphs—members resembling, and no doubt originating in, the terminations of beams of timber. These triglyphs are slightly projecting quadrilateral masses of stone, considerably higher than they are broad, and cut into deep vertical channels. They would express little besides the memory of the old timber construction, were it not for the *guttæ* which hang below them, separated from them by a fillet. These *guttæ*, by multiplying the vertical lines of the triglyphs, confer upon them the appearance of pendants, the force of the earthward tendency being increased by the fillets, whose momentary interruption of that tendency seems to increase it. To increase what Franz Kugler calls the “triglyphic character,” little pendants sometimes occur at the top of the chamfered



sides of the triglyphs. No one can realise the whole force of this extremely simple means of expression except by trying what the Doric entablature would be without it. There is, or was, a church in the Waterloo Road, massively built and preserving pretty well all the features of the Doric Temple, except the triglyphs and guttæ. Their omission makes the whole building light-headed. There seems to be no meaning in the vast current of upward force in the fluted shafts, if that is all they have to carry. Any one can satisfy himself of this point by simply covering the frieze, in a print of a Doric Temple, by a slip of white paper. Of course this all-important triglyphic character, though only expressed in the frieze, is felt to apply to the entire mass of the entablature, of which the weight is thus *made visible*.

As the architrave expresses simple weight, and the frieze weight depending, so the cornice is weight impending. The great projection of this massive member beyond the face of the frieze and architrave contains in itself the ground of that expression; but it is carefully heightened by the deep under-cutting of the corona, which throws the mass forward and separates it by a dark shadow from the top of the frieze; and it is still further heightened by a repetition of the rows of guttæ—which, however, in this instance seem to be sliding off the inclined faces of the mutules (inclined slabs set in the undercutting of the corona); so that the same device that gives dependent weight in the frieze, expresses weight impending in the cornice.

These are only a few of the more obvious means whereby the lovely equilibrium of the Doric style is



created. There are many other details, impossible to notice here; but every one bears the central thought constantly in view, and adds to the most perfect—though not perhaps the highest—architectural beauty the world has ever seen. The other so-called “orders” are only modifications or corruptions of the same idea.

### III

Before proceeding to show how the idea of Greek architecture, symbolised in a system of construction and decoration which emphasised to the eye in every detail an exact adequacy of endeavour to effect, was modified or corrupted in the so-called “Ionic,” “Corinthian,” and other “orders,” a few words should be said about the very peculiar and little understood treatment of the wall by the Doric architects. As a contrast to the active conflict of apparently ascending power in the columns with the gravitating power, rendered, as it were, visible in the entablature, the treatment of the walls of the *naos*, *pronaos*, and *posticum*—that is, of the body of the temple and of the porches created by the prolongation of the side walls—is emphatically passive and neutral, and just the reverse of the treatment of the wall by the Egyptians, who made it the base of a truncated pyramid, a mass of conscious ponderosity, which “lean’d down on earth with all its weight.” The vertical junctures of the stones of the walls of the Greek Temple were rendered invisible by the polishing of their adjacent faces; but the horizontal faces were rough-worked, so that the wall-face presented a series of straight lines parallel to

the base. These lines were only strong enough to be plainly seen through the gaps in that torrent of ascending power, the fluted colonnade ; increasing that force by their contrast, but themselves expressing nothing but the fact that the wall was a wall, built in ordinary courses of masonry. Had the perpendicular junctures of the masonry been visible, the contrasts to the shafts—which either were monoliths or had the junctures of the *frustra* so polished that they looked like monoliths—would have been lost. The *antæ*, or ends of the walls, are treated in a way which is particularly noteworthy. In the Roman corruptions of Greek architecture these *antæ* were confused with and often treated as flattened and applied shafts. The fact of passive resistance of the wall, in contrast to the active resistance of the colonnade, is carefully but very unobtrusively expressed in these wall-terminations in the purest Doric. Where the strongly ascending force of the shaft sacrifices power in order to prove its abundance, the *antæ* are increased in breadth and strength by successive cappings, or by mouldings so undercut as to express a rolling over or sufferance from superimposed weight ; there was no *entasis* or visible swell in the *antæ*—until they were used by later architects who had lost the sense of what *entasis* meant ; these wall-terminations were further strengthened by a base, which no Doric shaft ever had. The base and capping were, more or less, continued along the top and bottom of the whole wall, the doors and other apertures of which usually diminished in width towards the top, suggesting—but still in a passive and unobtrusive way—the simple reality of weight and pressure

in the wall, and affording a further and most important contrast to the living "emporstreben," as the German critics call it, of the line of shafts. Thus Mr. Ruskin is wrong in saying that "in the Greek Temple the wall is as nothing; the entire interest is in the detached columns and the frieze (entablature?) they bear." The wall is the expression of the passive life that becomes active when it is concentrated in the colonnade, and has so much more work to do.

In the "Ionic Order" exactly the same idea of the symbolisation of the balance of material and intellectual forces is carried out with the same integrity as in the Doric, though with less simplicity and obviousness. The idea of elasticity—as noticed by Franz Kugler in his *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* for the first time—is added to that of simple upward met by simple downward force. It occurs especially in the base and the volutes of the column, as these members are found modified and perfected by the Attic architects. By tracing the growth of the Attic base, much light will be thrown upon the Greek architectural idea. A base is a support for the shaft. The Doric had no base, because the notion of any weight to be supported was not allowed to be expressed anywhere but in the entablature; the Ionic differing from the Doric mainly in this—that the visible conflict between weight and supporting power, which in the Doric was wholly concentrated upon the abacus, or tile, where the column met the entablature, was in the Ionic so distributed that almost every member was at once agent and reagent, expressing an adequate power of supporting what was above it, but also requiring support

from that which was below. A great square stone or plinth is the simplest form of base ; but this would have looked poor and inorganic underneath the elaborately fluted and voluted column. The square stone cut into a circle with its edges rounded is the next simplest form ; but it was left for the Romans to use this base, for they had not the sensitive eye that discerned the fatal effect of swelling or sufferance from weight which this cushion-like form conveys. The first Ionic base had a *scotia*, or hollow receding moulding, under the round *torus*. This contradicted the above impression ; but it did it violently and awkwardly. Finally, the Attic base was formed of a large torus below, a smaller one above, and the *scotia*, or receding moulding, between them : so that the base—which, on the whole, was a spreading and supporting member—was nevertheless narrowest where it would have been thickest had it suffered, like a cushion, from the weight it carried. The fluting of the Ionic order, while it expressed ascendant force like the Doric, had a flat space or fillet instead of a sharp edge between each concavity, and each line of fluting had semi-circular terminations. The effect of this was to endow the shaft itself with a substantive expression of weight, which had no existence in the Doric shaft, that flew, like a sheaf of arrows, from the earth to strike against the ovolo of the capital. The Ionic capital, like the Ionic base, had its elastic character perfectly developed by Attic architects. In the original Ionic the ears of the volutes simply hang on either side of the ovolo like horns ; but in Attic specimens they appear to be formed by the pressure of the

entablature upon a series of elastic curves. The Ionic abacus differs from the Doric in expressing, in common with all the other members of the Ionic column, an active supporting power; whereas the Doric tile is simply negative, the "point of rest" between the opposing forces of the column and entablature. The architrave, the first member of the Ionic entablature, instead of expressing weight by simple mass, as the Doric architrave does, consists of two or three layers of masonry, the upper projecting over the other, and giving to the entire entablature the expression of impending weight, which in the Doric is limited to the corona. In the frieze there are no guttæ or triglyphs, because the pendent effect which these give to the Doric frieze would be inconsistent with the continuation of the idea of support as well as weight throughout all the members of the Ionic order. In the pure Doric there is absolutely no such thing as ornament; though Kugler, notwithstanding that he is of all critics the one who has come nearest to the perception of the true sense of Greek architecture, asserts that the head and foot members of the antæ are merely ornamental. How far this is from being the case has been now shown. The so-called "egg and arrow" and other figures into which Greek mouldings were cut have nothing to do with ornament. They are simply the means of emphasising the forms of the mouldings and rendering them visible at distances at which otherwise they would not be distinguished. But in the Ionic we have real architectural ornament, and lines of roses or bands of foliage are inserted at points where it is

desirable to express—in the absence of more severe means of expression—the freedom and cheerfulness with which a superincumbent weight is carried.

The “Corinthian” is only a highly decorated Ionic, and the Greeks of the good age seem to have thought it fittest for secular or semi-secular purposes. It attained somewhat of the character of an “Order” only in the hands of the Romans, who had little taste for or understanding of pure Greek art, but had sufficient intelligence to see how to apply ornament for the most part in the right places. When they tried to improve upon the Doric of the Parthenon, they did it in a very characteristic way. They simplified it by doing away with the fluting of the shaft and setting it upon a base of the single torus or roll-moulding, so that it looked like a big sausage set on end upon a small curly one; and instead of the channel cut in the neck of the shaft—which must have been a hopeless puzzle to them—they bound the shaft at the same point with a projecting moulding: as the Egyptians did rightly, because they wanted to express an idea the exact opposite of the Greek one. Meretricious ornament and mock simplicity went hand in hand, and all pretensions to integrity of style had to be abandoned when the arch and the entablature had to be reconciled. As builders the Romans perhaps surpassed all others before or since; and as architects also they were as great as they could be, in the absence of the Greek devotion to the unity produced by one all-pervading symbolic thought.



## IV

The pointed Gothic, though it took its rise more than fifteen hundred years after the decay of Attic architecture, and after the intervention of several other styles, of which the "Norman" constitutes one of the five great and only pure styles which the world has seen, is nevertheless in closer artistic relationship with the Attic style than the Norman is, and should be therefore treated earliest. The immense effort which was made to develop a great style from the dome—the natural outcome of the circular arch introduced by the Romans—never came to anything but the production of here and there an edifice which, like the Pantheon and St. Sophia, were miracles of technical skill, until the idea was taken up by the fanciful Moresque architects. Again, the Norman, though a great integral style, as will be shown, is not based upon any relation to weight of material; which is at once the great fact of building, and as such is made by the Egyptian, Greek, and Gothic architects to express the material, intellectual, and spiritual character of worship in ways that exhaust this primary source of architectural symbolism.

Weight—simple and irresistible in the Egyptian, adequately supported in the Greek—is, in the pointed Gothic, not abolished as in the Moresque, but totally vanquished and borne above, as by a superior spiritual power. Two happy accidents gave rise to this architectural development. As the Egyptian architecture was an artistic transfiguration of the necessities of an original cavern architecture, and as



the Doric Temple in a similar way transmuted to undreamt-of significance the forms of the timber hut, so the Gothic architecture found in the Basilica—the main forms of which were transmitted through the Norman cathedral—the accidental key to what probably will for ever remain the supreme glory of the art of temple-building. The Basilica itself contained nothing but the discovery of the most convenient way of roofing-in and lighting a great oblong hall. It consisted of nave and aisles; the walls of the nave rising within and above those of the aisles, to form the clerestory, which gave the centre of the edifice externally the appearance of unsheathing itself from and soaring above the rest. The means of emphasising and multiplying this effect indefinitely—as the pyramidal effect was multiplied and emphasised in the Egyptian Temple—were provided by another fortunate accident, the development of the pointed arch from the mechanical necessities of cross-vaulting. No sooner did a row of pointed arches make its appearance in the clerestory vaulting than the power of Gothic expression, latent in the main body of the building, became obvious. The tower, with its spire, was the first and simplest sequence. It was to the clerestory what this was to the main body of the building. In the course of a few years every detail of construction and decoration became subordinated to the heavenward flight which the main masses of the building had thus taken.

This fact is a threadbare commonplace of architectural criticism, and one which is obvious to the eye of the dullest beholder of the interior or exterior

of every Gothic cathedral; but the number and subtlety of the means by which the effect is gained are beyond all reckoning and analysis; and the object of this chapter is to point out only a few of them which are not to be found in architectural manuals, and to show how this all-prevailing stream of ardent aspiration was moderated and governed so as to acquire the expression of peace as well as ardour, as befitted the beauty of the Christian temple. Mr. Freeman comes nearer than any other eminent architectural critic to a clear discernment of Gothic character when he says: "Where there is no strife there is no victory; the vertical line cannot be called predominant unless the horizontal exist in a visible condition of subjection and inferiority." But the horizontal line exists in Gothic architecture as much more than a foil to vertical character; it checks and keeps it within bounds, and exhibits it as an expression of the infinite bounded and peacefully bounded by the finite—which is the true character of the life and worship symbolised. Hence the square-headed tower is as fine a finish to the Gothic cathedral as the spire is, if not finer. Compare the tower of York with the spire of Freyburg in Breisgau—the finest spire in the world, rising as it does as a spire from the ground—and it will be found that the cessation of the great, steady heavenward current in York, gradually prepared for as it is by the treatment of the face of the tower, and culminating in the compromise of open battlements, each of which frames the pointed arch, creates a more solemn and heart-expanding sense of infinite aspiration than the apparently greater flight of

endeavour in the famous spire, which soars indeed twice the height of the tower, but, as it were, evaporates as it soars. The minds of the Gothic architects seem to have been much divided as to which was better: the checked and contained expression of the tower, in which an undiminished force of ascension was suggested, or the exhausting flight of the spire. The tower of Salisbury, for example, was not originally intended to carry the spire, which was added long after the cathedral was completed. They often obtained both features, giving a spire to only one of the west-end towers. There is, perhaps, no more satisfactory treatment of the west front than this, as may be seen in Strasburg Cathedral. Like many other fine effects, this most probably arose from accident—the accident of its not being convenient at the time to add the second spire; but that the incompleteness was fully recognised as a perfection is proved by the many instances of its having been, if not devised, allowed to remain.

There are three ways of treating the spire. It may commence at the earth, as that of Freyburg does, without the intervention of a tower; or it may rise from a tower the head of which is considerably larger than the base of the spire; or the base of the spire may coincide with the top of the tower, in which case it is called a "broach spire." The second is the finest and by far the most frequent arrangement, as it combines the effects of spire and tower without confusing them; a part of the force of the tower being contained and checked, and a part being allowed to take its self-exhausting flight. It is to be observed, however, that

even when the spire is most prominent—as in Lichfield, where there are three of them—it is, when compared with the whole building, only as it were an accidental escape and waste of the vast current of vertical force expressed by the entire mass of the building. Perhaps the most expressive treatment of the tower is in the innumerable examples in which only a very small proportion of its vertical force is permitted to escape in four or more pinnacles, one of which is often larger than the others. Spires and pinnacles are in most cases covered with lines of “croquets”: figures in which ascending power is usually expressed by the upward growth of a leaf; which is emphasised by some check, made apparent to the eye by a strong bulge, like that of a current flowing over a stone. Wherever the idea of weight or side-thrust would occur naturally to the eye—as in buttresses, lower angles of gables, etc.—there is an especial outburst of flaming finial or pinnacle, or other mode of contradicting and reversing the idea, which the Greek architect would have been contented with accepting and beautifying.

Let us now enter the church, which is, within as well as without, a great geyser of ascending life; which may indeed lose itself in the dimness of the vaulted roof, as the spire loses itself in air, but never shows weariness of its flight or a memory of the earth from which it started. As in Egyptian and Greek architecture, so in the Gothic, we must look to the column for the strongest expression of the characterising idea. The Egyptian column suffered and seemed half-crushed under the weight it bore; the Greek rose

to its burthen with the glad assurance of being fully adequate to its task. The Gothic is conscious of no task at all; but flies, without the least diminution of its substance, and without swelling either under sufferance or gathering of strength by entasis at any particular point, to the commencement of the arch; where it divides itself, sending up the streams of its clustered shafts, some into the lines of the arch and others to the top of the clerestory wall; while others again follow the lines of the vaulting, there to meet like fingers joined in prayer, but still having no thought of the weight of the roof they really help to carry.

Mr. Ruskin complains of Gothic capitals—as he might also have done of Gothic bases—that they are unnecessary and ridiculous because they have no bearing power. If they had, they would cease to be Gothic, and the whole character of the wonderful art would be ruined. Capitals are sometimes entirely omitted, as in the shafted piers of Cologne; but when this is the case the point at which the arch springs becomes doubtful to the eye, and there is something exhausting in the wholly uninterrupted flight of the vertical lines. The capitals, like the horizontal *annulet* which often binds at intervals the clustered column, have no other purpose but to correct these effects of unrelieved continuity; and the mouldings of capitals, when they exist, not only have no and express no “bearing-power,” but very carefully express the contrary by various devices of undercutting, etc. It is the same with the base, when it is not altogether dispensed with. The most common form of Gothic base is a curious caricature of the Attic base, the form

of which had been transmitted unimpaired to the Gothic architect through the Romanesque and Norman. It was perched upon and *overhung* a stilted plinth, which was itself a reversal of the expression of elementary support in the original flat plinth; and the curves of this base were so diminished in one part and exaggerated in another that all reference to supporting power seemed to be derisively abolished. The "ogee" is a moulding which strongly expresses carrying power. A favourite Gothic base was two *reversed* ogees, the lower projecting far over the edge of the plinth, which, in classic architecture, always afforded a wide-spreading field for the base. And so on.

It would take a bulky volume to trace the wonderful integrity with which the three modes of envisaging the idea of weight are carried out in the three great architectures; but enough has been said to give the clue by which a fairly cultivated and perceptive student may follow up the subject for himself.

## V

Before proceeding to consider the Norman and Moresque styles, a word should be said about that portion of Gothic decoration which does not directly help the main effect of aspiration—namely, cusped and foliated tracery, diaper-work, the foliage of spandrels, etc., etc. Kugler says: "This filling-in appears as a peculiar sort of architecture of independent significance." He does not, however, give the interpretation which he sees to be required. Yet there is an interpre-



tation which needs only to be put in words to be obvious to every eye which has made itself familiar with these objects. In exact proportion to the recognised perfection of these details, as it was attained in the middle or "decorated" period of pointed architecture, they become expressions of an idea almost identical with that which has been traced in the mode by which contented suspension or delay of the infinitely aspiring character in the main lines of the building is conveyed. As the inexhaustible torrent of upward life is checked peacefully, but with no denial of infinite *potential* aspiration, in the square-headed tower, so the same reconciliation of life with law without the least detriment to either—that reconciliation which is the consummation of Christianity—is expressed even more completely in the more essentially decorative details of pointed architecture. It is in the treatment of foliage that this character can be most easily traced, and this can be done best by comparing it with other modes of treatment. By the Greek architect this and other natural objects, when wanted for ornament, were what is called "conventionalised"; honeysuckles, roses, and waves of the sea were represented by certain formal figures which suited the lines of the architecture, and were not so much like nature as to attract attention from those all-important lines to themselves. In the Italian Gothic, again, such natural objects are represented as nearly as possible like nature, but with such slight modifications and arrangements as were necessary to give them the consciousness of art. This is the sort of imitation which Mr. Ruskin recommends, and into which the



northern Gothic fell in the decay of the art. But in fourteenth-century Gothic—that is to say, in the Gothic which was as much superior to that of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries as the art of Athens was superior to that of Pæstum or Rome—nature was neither imitated nor conventionalised. The special aim of the fourteenth-century ornamentation is to show a vigorous life playing with perfect freedom in severely geometrical forms—with freedom so perfect that it is difficult to say whether the life shapes the law or the law the life. This highly and essentially symbolic character is the most marked expression of Gothic tracery. In its decay it took the form of licence and weakness in the French “flamboyant,” and of hardness and rigidity in the English “perpendicular”; the life prevailing—to its own destruction—in the one, the lifeless law preponderating in the other. Gothic foliage, again, always *feels* the law; though, so far from suffering thereby, it is, in its place, far more beautiful than nature. The leafage not only follows geometrical outlines, but swells under its limitation into rich protuberances. The yearning for and potentiality of infinite ascension, peacefully accepting its temporal limitations, and the freedom of life perfected by law, are the artistic motives of every detail as well as of the main masses of pure Gothic.

The Romano-Byzantine style attained in its final development, the “Norman,” to the unity of idea which is the criterion of a true style. The arch up to this time had been treated partly as a thing of beauty in itself and partly as the constructive theme; in the Norman it took its place, expressionally, as subordinate

to the wall, the mass of which it carries and distributes between the piers. The wall itself is the artistic theme of Norman architecture, and all decorative and some constructional features are devoted to making a boast of its *mass* and *thickness*. *Weight*—the theme in the three highly contrasted modes of the Egyptian, Greek, and Pointed architectures — plays no part in the Norman expression. The arch, being recognised by the eye for what it is, an infinitely powerful supporter, can express no proportion to finite superincumbent weight ; and it is treated as a mere head to the gap in the wall between nave and aisle. The expressional intention of the Norman architects in this matter is curiously and decisively proved by the fact that their favourite arch-mouldings were the *billet* and *chevron*—*i.e.* lines of notches and angles which completely broke up all idea of arch-character as referable to supporting power or to weight distributed on to the piers, and transferred the interest of the eye to the material substance of the wall out of which these figures were cut. The piers between these arches were huge masses of wall, either quadrangular or turned into great cylinders, without *entasis* or any other sign of having to bear anything ; and such decoration as they had was devised so as to deny emphatically any reference to superimposed burthen. The figure of the weight-carrying shaft set in the angles of these piers was their principal decoration ; but they were Lilliputian mockeries of the Attic shaft, or were twisted singly or doubly, and in various other ways ridiculed, as it were, the idea that shaft-*power* was demanded in the huge masses of masonry to which they were attached. The only thing that these

little shafts—whether in notch of pier or in recess of porch, blind arcade, or window—ever carried or appeared to carry was a single line of the often innumerable mouldings, the purpose of which was simply to display the immense thickness of the wall, which was the true and only theme of his style. This system of emphasising the wall by negating the shaft-power was occasionally carried into the almost grotesque excess of representing the shaft as broken in the middle! The favourite treatment of the Norman wall was to boast of its thickness exactly as the Doric shaft boasted of its supporting power—that is, by throwing away some portion of it. The face of the wall was recessed in panels, which were often filled with blind arcades. Modern builders often recess walls in this way in order to save material, leaving the wall thickest where it has most work to do; but the Norman and Lombard architects had no such economy in view. The windows and other apertures in the wall showed, by their shafted and moulded chamfers, a reality of thickness so great that the panelling and blank arcading were seen to *be* no sacrifice, though they were a delicate and effective suggestion of one. This arcaded panelling is not only on one plane of the wall-surface. The recessed plane is again recessed in the same way, and yet again, arcade within arcade; and finally, in the higher portions of the wall, open galleries are worked in its thickness. In apertures the constructive rule which requires that the bevel or chamfer should slant inwards, to give the better light, is sacrificed to the opportunity of showing the mass of the wall; and the chamfer is external, and is so treated in its decora-

tion as to increase in every possible way the appearance of thickness. The treatment of the doorway, which is the point from which the expressional idea may be best enforced upon every beholder, is very peculiar. When there is no advanced porch, a deep arch is practised through a great part of the wall, and the thickness is emphasised by an elaborate perspective of shafts and mouldings. Within this deeply recessed arch the actual doorway is often worked as a horizontal-headed aperture in a plane face of wall without chamfer; the remaining thickness of the wall, not shown by the recessed arch, being thus left to be measured by the imagination, which has already been excited by the display of thickness within thickness of decorated archway. The Norman architects, in order still further to increase this effect, had sometimes recourse to a device that can scarcely be justified by strict architectural principles, which should never falsify construction in order to heighten expression. A face of wall was advanced in front of the main wall of the building, in order to obtain a much greater depth of masonry for showing off the multitudinously moulded entrance-arch. This projection did not form a real advanced porch, having its proper ecclesiastical purposes, but was nothing but a boast and display of mass in the masonry which really had no existence, the advanced face of wall concealing the fact that there was only mass enough behind it to allow of this misleading display. It may be said that the Gothic spire is constructed simply for display. It is quite true; but it is avowedly so constructed, and there was no concealment about it.

Mr. Ruskin, by the way, strangely affirms that "the direct symbolisation of a sentiment is a weak motive with all men"; inferring thence that there was no intention of aspiration in the Pointed architecture which he cares so little for. But surely the reverse is the case; and such symbolisation, in one way or other, constitutes a great part of the life of all men. The Gothic spire, which was the most costly, as well as the most useless feature of the Gothic cathedral, is a final answer to such doctrine, which strikes indeed at the life of all artistic work. If it did not "symbolise a sentiment," what was done by it?"

The round arch, which was the accident of the Norman architecture, being treated therein as a mere cavernous gap in masses of, in themselves, all-sufficient masonry, was, as it has been already said, adopted by the Byzantine architects as the principal theme of their art; but this arch could be made nothing of, as the main source of expression, until it developed the dome; and the dome, as it proved, could not be made much of, until the Moresque builders took it in hand. It had the fatal defect, when on a large scale, of lateral thrust, which could be met only by a construction having the double defect of positive and negative falsehood. The domes of St. Sophia and St. Vitale, which the eye naturally presumes to be of one mass or substance with the substructure, are really formed, for lightness, of Rhodian bricks, pumice-stone, and coils of empty jars; and yet the lateral thrust is so great that it has to be opposed by a vast buttress-system, which is carefully concealed, because it would contradict, if exposed, the inevitable effect of extreme lightness in

the dome. The Renaissance architects found themselves equally at a loss, as we know, in dealing with this feature. Both in St. Peter's and in St. Paul's there is not one but two entirely separate domes. And when all is done the Byzantine and Renaissance domes are nothing to the eye but hollow shells, with no special artistic expression.

The Moresque architects hit upon the astonishing fancy of giving the dome *substance*, and thereby reconciling it with the constructive masses which supported and abutted upon it, and at the same time annihilating the idea of weight. This last idea already lurked in the Byzantine domes of St. Sophia, which seem to be carried wholly by "pendentives," and not at all by the piers to which these are attached. But it only lurked therein; for the eye necessarily inferred the immense lateral weight which piers and walls received. Now the honeycombed domes of the Moresque architecture are multiplied masses of pendentive forms hanging actually in air, and making it impossible for the eye to entertain any idea of lateral thrust in the whole or any part; and every detail of column, wall, and arch corroborates this fanciful negation of weight so perfectly that, for unity of effect, the Attic architecture remains the only rival of the Moresque, though there is this infinite difference between them: that, whereas the first appeals to the imagination and symbolises the Greek ideal of mental and moral equilibrium in forms of true construction, the latter only excites the fancy by a fairy tale. The whole carrying and resisting power of the arch is flung away by conferring upon it outlines which have no such power (the real carrying



arch being hidden in the wall far outside the visible arch) : the arches in colonnades, etc., seldom rest on, but simply abut against, the columns, which usually carry broad perpendicular beams, these being crossed above the arch-head by similar horizontal beams ; so that there is only a small rectangular space of wall over each arch, and the idea of the weight of this being carried by the arch is contradicted by a network of bars carrying the lines of the wall into the upright beams. When a single arch is set in a wall, it is similarly framed in fretwork, the lines of which carry the eye off the arch without being pronounced enough to convey the idea that the force of the wall is thus conducted laterally to some support outside the arch.

It is impossible, in the space which can here be given to the matter, to notice one in a score of the details combining to produce the effect wherewith every one is familiar. The purpose of these pages will have been answered if the vivifying thought of each of the five architectures, which alone are integral styles and not mixtures of styles, has been stated clearly, and such hints of the means by which such thought is conveyed have been given as will enable those who care to go further into the subject to do the rest of the analysis by themselves.





RELIGIO POETÆ, ETC.



Function of Poet

I

RELIGIO POETÆ

NO one, probably, has ever found his life permanently affected by any truth whereof he has been unable to obtain a *real apprehension*, which, as I have elsewhere shown, is quite a different thing from *real comprehension*. Intellectual assent to truths of faith, founded on what the reason regards as sufficient authority for, at least, experimental assent, must, of course, precede real apprehension of them, as also must action, in a sort experimental, on faith of truths so assented to; but such faith and action have little effective life, and are likely soon to cease, or to become mere formalities, unless they produce some degree of vital knowledge or perception. I do not see what is to become of popular Religion, parodied and discredited as Christianity is by the "Religions" of Atheists, Moralists, Formalists, Philanthropists, Scientists, and Sentimentalists, unless there can be infused into it some increased longing and capacity for real apprehension.

Coleridge, at one time, proposed to write a "Religio Poetæ," with the view, I suppose, of correcting the imperceptive character of modern faith. The Poet is, par excellence, the perceiver, nothing having any interest for him, unless he can, as it were, see and touch it with the spiritual senses, with which he is pre-

eminently endowed. The Saints, indeed, seem, for the most part, to have had these senses greatly developed by their holiness and their habitual suppression of the corporeal senses. But, as a rule, they do not speak, perhaps from the fear of being too implicitly believed; or, if they do, they are careful

"To make Truth look as near a lie  
As can comport with her divinity,"

in order to adapt it to the public capacity. But the Poet has this advantage, that none, save the few whose ears are opened to the teaching which would be ridiculed or profaned to their own destruction by the many, will think that he is in earnest, or that his flights into regions of perception, in which they can perceive nothing, are other than flights of fancy. He occupies a quite peculiar position—somewhere between that of a Saint and that of Balaam's Ass. His intellect seems capable of a sort of independent sanctification, while his moral constitution usually enables him to prophesy without a Prophet's responsibilities. The Saint dreads lest he should receive praise of men for the holiness through which he has acquired his knowledge; the Poet understands very well that no one will or ought to think the better of his righteousness for his being a seer.

The Poet, again, is not more singular for the delicacy of his spiritual insight, which enables him to see celestial beauty and substantial reality where all is blank to most others, than for the surprising range and alertness of vision, whereby he detects, in external nature, those likenesses and echoes by which

*image is the reality apprehended*

## RELIGIO POETÆ

*Imagination*

spiritual realities can alone be rendered credible and more or less apparent, or subject to "real apprehension," in persons of inferior perceptive powers. Such likenesses, when chosen by the imagination, not the fancy, of the true Poet, are real words—the only real words; for "that which is unseen is known by that which is seen," and natural similitudes often contain and are truly the visible ultimates of the unseen. "God," says Goethe, "is manifested in ultimates,"—a doctrine destined to produce some amazing developments of Christianity, which is yet in its infancy, though it seems, as it has always seemed to contemporaries, to be in its decay. The Poet, again, has, like Newton, a special calculus—a doctrine of infinite series, whereby he attains to unveil the infinite and express it in credible terms of the finite, showing it, if not as actually apprehensible, yet as possibly, and even certainly so, to orders of intellect which are probably only a continuation and development of our own. Of this calculus Dante has abundantly made use, and those passages in his Poems which we read with the most passionate delight and real apprehension are precisely those in which the argument rises from natural experience to the dizziest heights of spiritual probability. For neither in this, nor in any other Poet of like rank, is there any solution of continuity between the lowest and the highest, any more than there is in the progress of the seed from its first germination through its various transformations in seed-leaf, stem, flower, and fruit. It is still nature, but more mature nature—nature developed by successive and intelligible degrees of growth and glory, the first

of these degrees being, even in this life, quite familiar to those who *know* the truth of Wordsworth's saying—

"By grace divine,  
Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine."

Again, the Poet always treats spiritual realities as the concrete and very credible things they truly are. He has no slipshod notions about the immeasurable and "infinite." He knows, as Plato knew, that God Himself is most falsely described as infinite. God is the synthesis, as Proclus declares in his treatise on the Fables of Homer, of "Infinite" and "Boundary," and is excellently intelligible, though for ever unutterable, by those who love Him.

Another vast advantage in the Poet's mode of teaching is that it is, even in its indignant denials of negation, necessarily and always, as far as he is a Poet, affirmative and positive. "Let your communication be, Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." He gives the world to eat only of the Tree of Life, reality; and will not so much as touch the Tree of Knowledge, as the writer of Genesis ironically calls the Tree of Learning that leads to denial of knowledge. He is the very reverse of a "scientist." He is all vision and no thought, whereas the other is all thought and no vision. But "Where there is no vision the People perish"; and of thought without vision it may be truly said, "Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," and "dust thou art and to dust shalt thou return." The Poet could not do other than he does. All realities will sing, but nothing else will. Judge then how much reality there



is, in the modern teaching of religion, by the songs of its prophets ! Where in these songs is the flavour of reality, "the sweetness of the lips that increaseth learning" ?

There is a kind of perception in a state of solution which must not be overlooked or depreciated. It is the substance of most of the finest lyric poetry, and of the religion of nearly all religious people, especially in these days. But this fire-mist is a very inferior form of perceptive knowledge. There is none of it in Dante. It is the "Infinite" without the "Bound," and is not sufficiently concrete to be very serviceable or communicable, being mainly unintelligent heat, though that heat may be holy. For effective teaching there must be the disc of really apprehended dogma; rays diversely reflected and refracted from clouded sources will not do. The soul *dares* not believe its own marvellous guesses and instincts, unless it can fall back upon definite dogma for confirmation and justification, nor can the corollaries of dogma, which are often of far more personal weight than dogma itself, be inferred without a definite premise.

I suppose I need not say that by Poets I do not, in this argument, mean only or chiefly those who have written in verse. During most of the centuries which have elapsed since the beginning of Christianity the highest imaginative as well as intellectual powers of mankind have been wholly absorbed by theology and theological psychology; and I may say, without fear of contradiction from those who are at all well read in the works of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Sales, St. John of the Cross,

and a score of others like them, that the amount of substantial poetry, of imaginative insight into the noblest and loveliest reality to be found in their writings, is ten times greater than is to be found in all the poets of the past two thousand years put together. The vastness of the mass hinders our appreciation of its substance and altitude. Aquinas is to Dante as the Tableland of Thibet is to the Peak of Teneriffe; and the first is not less essentially a poet, in the sense of a Seer, because his language is even more austere and without ornament, than that of the latter. It is true that the outward form of poetry is an inestimable aid to the convincing and persuasive power of poetical realities; but there is a poetic region—the most poetical of all—which is incapable of taking the form of poetry. Its realities take away the breath which would, if it could, go forth in song; and there is such a boundless wilderness of equally inspiring subject to chose from that choice becomes impossible, and the tongue of love and joy is paralysed.

To conclude, I think that it must be manifest to fitly qualified observers, that religion, which to timid onlookers appears to be on a fair way to total extinction, is actually, both by tendency from within and compulsion from without—through heresies and denials of all that cannot be “realised”—in the initial stage of a new development, of which the note will be *real apprehension*, whereby Christianity will acquire such a power of appeal to the “pure among the Gentiles,” i.e., our natural feelings and instincts, as will cause it to appear almost like a New Dispensation, though it will truly be no more than the fulfil-

ment of the express promises of Christ and His Apostles to the world—promises which in every age have been fulfilled to thousands and thousands of individuals who have so learned “the King’s secret” as to have become the converts of intelligible joy. Or would it be too vast a hope that such a development may truly assume the proportions and character of a New Dispensation, the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Life and perceived Reality, continuing and fulfilling the Dispensation of Christ, as His did that of the Father—the “Persona,” or aspect of the Holy Trinity in the worship of the Israelites? a Dispensation under which millions instead of thousands should awake to those facts of life of which Christ said, “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them yet; but when the Holy Spirit shall come, He shall teach you the things I have told you.” Under the first dispensation men were the servants of God; under the second, His sons: “Sons now we are of God, but what we shall be hath not yet appeared.” What if, under a third, “the voice of the Bride and the Bridegroom shall be heard again in our streets”? Our Lord, by an intervention which He declared to be premature, converted water into the wine of the Marriage Feast. He did so for hundreds, before the time of His manifestation in the flesh; He has done so for thousands who “have lived to see His coming” since. What if His fuller coming to the whole Church should be a like revelation, even in this life, for every one who so “seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” that “all these things shall be added to him”?

## II

### THE PRECURSOR

ST. AUGUSTINE, in answer to some one who objected that there were several interpretations of a passage in Scripture besides that which the Saint had offered, replied: "The more interpretations the better." The words of Scripture and of the ancient mythologies and profoundest Poets may, indeed, be credited with containing and intending all the truths which they can be made to carry, and I do not mean to controvert any other account of the significance of the peculiar, mysterious, and, in *the letter*, unaccountable place held by St. John the Baptist in relation to the gospel of Divine Love, when I point out that the relation of Natural Love to Divine Love is represented by him with a consistent aptness and an amount of detail which can scarcely have been accidental.

In the first place he is represented not as simply a Prophet, but as the "*Precursor*" of Christ, as Natural Love is the Precursor of the Divine. "The natural first, and afterwards the spiritual." St. Bernard says: "The love of God has its first root in the most secret of the human affections." The love between God and the soul is constantly declared to be, in its highest

perfection, the love that subsists between Bridegroom and Bride ("thy Maker is thy Husband," etc., etc.), and our only means of understanding and attaining to these supernatural relations are the meditation and contemplation of their types in nature. "The unseen is known by that which is seen." "No greater than he was born of woman," *i.e.*, nature; but "the least in the Kingdom of Heaven," *i.e.*, Divine Love, "is greater than he"; and, as the latter increases, he must decrease. His baptism was necessary even to Christ as the representative of Christians, for none can receive effectually Christ's baptism of fire and the Holy Spirit without the previous baptism of the purifying water of natural love—water itself always signifying, in the parabolic vocabulary of all primitive religions, the life of the external senses, or nature. Food of locusts, *wild* honey, and clothing of camel's hair are also interpreted—by those who are most learned in that mystical vocabulary which everybody acknowledges to have been largely in use by the writers of the Scriptures as well as by those of all the great mythologies, and without which a great part of Scripture is hopelessly unintelligible—as significant of life in natural good, of which the highest is natural love. "Honey," writes one of the most deeply learned in this vocabulary, "signifies natural good." "Locusts," says the same writer, "signify nutriment in the extreme natural," and camel's hair and a leathern girdle "denote what is natural," skin and hair being those things which are most external. St. John the Baptist is spoken of by the Church as the "strong man" and the "standard-bearer," being the

mightiest of human powers and their leader. He alone of all natural men is "sanctified from his mother's womb" and originally holy: "sole mortal thing of worth immortal." He "came to bear testimony to the light" of that Love which is the fulfilment of the prophecy of natural love. Herod, the world, was friendly to him, who nevertheless rebuked the Tetrarch for his violation of a law of natural love, and the Saint was sacrificed by him to an impure passion and the allurements of a dancing girl; which is the usual fate of pure natural love, "sanctified from the womb," when brought into conflict with the sensuality which apes and profanes it. "Let the Church," says the Service of the Saint's Day, "rejoice in the nativity of blessed John the Baptist, by whom she came to the knowledge of the Author of her regeneration." "Behold," says the same Service, "I have given thee to be the light of the *Gentiles*," i.e. the interpreter of the faculties and desires of the *natural* man. In virtue of his peculiar mission the Baptist compares and measures himself with Christ as no other ever did: "He must increase, I must decrease"; "He cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose;" I am not the Christ, that *most* holy love, for whom ye, who have not yet seen Him, take me, but only the one pure mortal voice "crying in the desert" of the world, and prophesying of Him; "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" "He was not the true light, but was to give testimony of the light." "After me there cometh a man who is preferred before me," etc.

Jesus, being baptized by John, the heavens were



opened to him, and a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" *i.e.* by the baptism of natural love, the heavens are *sensibly* opened to him who is already the Son of God, and Christ, as the representative of Christians, is declared then most pleasing to the Father when He has donned and assumed to Himself the *natural* life of love. Concerning the Baptist, our Lord afterwards says: "What went ye out to see? A Prophet? Yea, I tell you, and *more than a prophet*. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my *Angel* before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee," "and if you will receive it, he is Elias that is to come. *He that hath ears, let him hear.*" Our Lord says of John: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (that is, the Divine Love cannot effectually witness directly of itself), "there is another" (natural love) "that beareth witness of me. He was a burning and a shining light, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in him." John is "the *friend* of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, and rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice. This *my joy is therefore fulfilled.*" John, though naturally nearer to Jesus than any other man "born of woman" (nature) "knew him not" but by the coming of the Holy Spirit, *i.e.* divine inspiration. So natural love, though so pure an image of the divine, knows not the divine until this is supernaturally revealed to it.

What seems to be thus obscurely shown forth as a parable in the life of the Precursor is, however, plainly affirmed by other parts of Scripture and by the doctrine of the Church concerning the significance of



natural love. It is distinctly declared to be a "great Sacrament," or fact having a symbolic value of the highest consequence, as representative of the final and essentially nuptial relationship of Christ and the Church, of which every member is a church in little, with Our Lord for her head, as man is the head of woman, and God the Head of Christ. It is remarkable that, in a time when general reverence for religion is greatly diminishing, a true but altogether unenlightened reverence for the holy mystery of natural love should be sensibly increasing among us; and we may, perhaps, hail this circumstance as the precursor of a new development of Christianity which shall exert a hitherto unknown power over men, as being based upon and explanatory of their universal instincts and longings, which the symbol is, by as universal consent, wholly incapable of satisfying. And, besides the interest of the feelings, the intellect of man, which is now bent upon examining everything, must find, in the otherwise inexplicable phenomena of natural love, a satisfaction in the prospect of finding its key in another mystery which is, at least, much less inscrutable and does not involve any of the anomalies and absurdities of that passion, when it is regarded as an end having no further end. Every one who has loved and reflected on love for an instant, knows very well that what is vulgarly regarded as the end of that passion, is, as the Church steadfastly maintains, no more than its accident. The flower is not for the seed, but the seed for the flower. And yet what is that flower, if it be not the rising bud of another flower, flashed for a moment of eternal

moment before our eyes, and at once withdrawn, lest we should misunderstand the prophecy, and take it for our final good? If it be other than a symbol, that is, as Coleridge defines a symbol to be, a part taken to represent the whole, then love, which the heart of every lover knows to be the supreme sanity, must be condemned by the intellect as the supreme insanity; and its "extravagances," which, from the Church's point of view, are in the highest representative order, must be looked upon as those of a maniac who takes a green goose for a goddess and himself for a god. But all this becomes clear when the parties to love are regarded as priest and priestess to one another of the divine womanhood and the divine manhood which are inherent in original Deity. They are but ministers to each other of the "great sacrament" of that glory "which the Son had with the Father before the beginning of the world"; and the co-existence of the greatest defects, short of an absolute defect of manhood and womanhood, with a claim to the greatest reverence and devotion, has its exact analogue in the nature and claims of priesthood, as being the vehicle—and only the vehicle—of the Divine in sacramental administrations.

I should far exceed the space to which I have desired to limit myself were I to exhaust the sayings of the Scripture and the services of the Church which bear upon this interpretation of the Precursorship of John. Let me, however, point out that the great painters of the Renaissance, from Botticelli and earlier downwards—men who show, to those who have eyes to see, the most ardent interest in the

hidden meanings of scriptural sayings and events—seem to have discerned and intended to convey the substance of what I have now said, by their frequent associations of the *two* Johns, John the Baptist and John “the *Divine*,” as companions and co-worshippers of the Child Jesus, their synthesis, “God made Man of the Woman,” to whose maternal bosom he eternally clings.

### III

#### THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION

THE realities discerned by faith are susceptible of infinite corroboration, for "God is infinitely visible and infinitely credible," and, since the knowledge of God is the one end of life, the sum of human wisdom consists in the accumulation of such corroborations. Now any fresh and original testimony is thus corroborative. It is the nature of man to believe the more because another believes, and to derive additional knowledge from another's mode of knowing. But how shall such testimony be conveyed, without betraying knowledge which often cannot be attempted to be spoken without profanation by and peril to the ignorant, except in enigmas which are clear to those who know, but hopelessly dark to those who do not? Accordingly we find that the teaching of every great religion, the Jewish and Christian perhaps above all, when it once leaves the preparatory stage of natural religion and morals and formal dogma, becomes mainly enigmatical and mythical. It is quite right that popular teaching should be limited, as it is, to the preparatory stage and to the enforcement of it by Divine sanction, threats, and general promises; for

the house of God must be built, the soul must know the direction in which to look for light, and must be formed gradually into sincere desire of and constant endeavour for perfection, before God can inhabit it, and baptize it with that fire without which the baptism of water lies dormant as a grain of wheat in an Egyptian tomb. It is at this point that real religion, which is self-evident, begins, and at this point occurs that great change in the mode of the soul's progress which is well known to Catholic psychologists. Up to this point the progression is from truth to good; afterwards from good to truth, its rule then becoming "prove all things; hold fast" (not "that which is true," but) "that which is good"; the substance becomes the guide to the form, whereas, before, the form was the guide to the substance; and at this point the Church begins to teach the soul, chiefly by enigmas, how she may best understand the instructions and reciprocate the complacencies of that Divine Lover of whom she is henceforward the intimate companion and the living abode.

The *fact* of the existence of these enigmas lies patent to the dullest. The vision of Ezechiel (which no one was permitted to read before he was thirty years of age), Seir and Paran, in which God was, but the people knew it not; the myth given in the Breviary on the day of the "apparition of St. Michael"; the great serpent, Leviathan; the King of Egypt become King of Israel; the almost identical myth of Proteus, the sea-beast, also called "Cetes, King of Egypt"; the birth of Aphrodite; the mystery of Persephone, whose true name it was not lawful to utter, concerning which

Æschylus says: "Happy is he who comprehends it, for over him Hades shall have no power"; and a thousand other such things are manifest "riddles," and were manifestly meant for such. Moreover, they are, for the most part, such *elaborate* riddles that the key which unlocks any one of them, the thought which fills up all the manifold vacuities of external sense, must be *the* key and *the* thought.

Of most such enigmas Proclus says, in his treatise on the Fables of Homer, that they are unfit for the reading of youth, to whom they are absurd, or scandalous, or worse; but that they are the proper food of age when purged by discipline from obscuring and uncontrolled passions, the co-existence of which with the knowledge of Divine secrets would involve that conjunction of perceived good with its denial by actual evil, which is more irremediably fatal to the soul than any amount of unmixed impurity. The senseless and often repulsive external word of these enigmas is as the black "veil of Moab," which God hangs before the sanctuaries of His brightest glory; and as the foul expirations of the serpent of Cos, which repelled all but him who was pure and bold enough in faith to kiss the death-breathing lips, and so convert them into those of a goddess, exhaling celestial perfumes.

Her whole system of language and rites proves either that the Church, who can speak her mind plainly enough when there is occasion for plainness, wantonly and habitually indulges in the folly of delivering a large part of her message in a language that few can understand, or that there is a body of knowledge which ought not to be and cannot be effectually com-

municated to all ; and that, in her reticence, she is but obeying the command : " Tell not the vision to any man till Christ be risen " in him.

It would, no doubt, be of great use to many if the meaning of a few of the principal of the symbolic words common to all great religions were made a part of religious instruction ; though it is wonderful how, by a sort of instinct, some of these keys are discerned and read by the simplest and least instructed of those who, among their low surroundings and labours, lead pure and meditative lives. I have heard some of our " savages," hunters of " Little Bethels," " Sions," and " Carmels," use the obscurest imagery of Scripture with an evident grasp of significance which many a Bishop might have envied. Such acquaintance with the vocabulary of symbols would not unveil anything which ought to remain veiled, while the ordinary reader and unenlightened enthusiast would be saved by it from the absurdities and scruples and often pernicious extravagances into which he now falls through his literal adoption of words which to sensible persons are manifestly parabolic ; and the student of deeper capacity would be provided with the clues without which he cannot read even the letter of the enigmas of life.

To readers of the early Christian writers, the interpretation of many of these words must be familiar. The names of the four chief points of the compass, water, fire, cloud, thunder, lightning, nation, generation, father, mother, son, daughter, rich, poor, tree, stone, fish, mountains, birds, rod, flower, leaf, etc.



etc., have fixed significances without the knowledge of which thousands of passages of Scripture, even those not involving any enigmatic meaning, cannot be understood. What, without such knowledge, can be made of passages, among innumerable others, like this : "The coming of the Son of Man is as the lightning which shineth from the east unto the west ; for where the body is there shall the eagles be gathered together" ? Or how, without such means of interpretation, can some of the direct injunctions of Our Lord, even in what is vulgarly supposed to be the plain speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, be obeyed ? Of some of these injunctions, St. Augustine, rejecting the literal sense, says, in one of his sermons : "You may do these things if you can, but I cannot." From what torments might the poor simpleton of a modern pietist be saved by remembering that Our Lord "spake not without a parable" !

This mode of expressing realities by things having some resemblance to them, carried to the highest and fully conventionalised in the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, was, no doubt, the origin of the similar language of Scripture, the early Church, and the mythologists, and must have been readily intelligible by the learned and those *mystæ* to whom their learning was gradually imparted. A still earlier mode of what may be called real speech may be found in those first roots of language which William Barnes and other philologists have shown to constitute a system of *phonetic* imagery—of sounds having a subtle correspondence to things. And the language of the poetry—the only *real* speech—of all nations and times, has

largely consisted of a mixture of phonetic and objective imagery.

There is, besides, the more spacious imagery of parable proper, of which the external word is a consistent story, fictive or actually historic. Of this kind it may be well to point out that the Church, in her services, authorises the belief that many of the simplest incidents, even in the New Testament, have parabolic meanings of far higher value than the historic, which meanings we are sometimes called upon, in the prayers that, in the Breviary, etc., follow the recitals, to beg that "we may be made worthy to understand." Indeed, nothing can account for the emphasis and repetition with which some, extremely trivial, incidents are related in the New Testament, without attributing to the writers either the extreme of silliness and irrelevance, or a wisdom of which few of us are worthy to lift the veil.

Let it be remarked that symbolic and more or less enigmatic language and rites have a high value, even when they are not intended to conceal truth from those to whom its expression would be premature. They compel, ~~in the recipient of their teaching,~~ a state of active co-operation, a voluntary excitement of the mind, greatly more favourable to the abiding effect of moral truths and impressions than is the state of merely passive attention. This mode of reception includes the act of reflection, without which no know- ~~ledge ever becomes our own.~~ And here let it be said that, so far are the originators and doctors of the great religions of the world and its greatest poets from having adopted an unnatural method of teaching, that

it is the very method of Nature, whose book, from beginning to end, is nothing but a series of symbols, enigmas, parables, and rites, only to be interpreted by the "discerning intellect of man" actively and laboriously employed.

The rites, customs, architecture, ornaments, and vestures of the Church are stores of more or less enigmatic teaching, and not one can be destroyed or altered without risk of some unknown loss. What have we not lost, what loss have we not to fear in the future, from the vandalism of "good taste." How "natural," for example, it would be that King Humbert, if ever he thinks fit to assume possession of St. Peter's and the Vatican, should regard the erection of an Egyptian obelisk in the forecourt of a Renaissance church as a monstrous solecism in art, and so abolish one of the boldest and most impressive symbols ever devised to teach man that the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" (with this title the obelisk is inscribed) "came out of Egypt," that the "great Serpent Pharaoh, King of Egypt" (or Nature) "is become Christ" by his assumption of the body which, without Him, is Egypt.

The Breviary, the Missal, the "Little Office," and other service books of the Church, are inexhaustible storehouses of such teaching, their leading method being the immediate opposition of passages from Scripture and the Fathers and prayers and ejaculations which, at first sight, have no related meaning, but in which the existence of a common meaning, which is the true one, is suggested, and may be discovered by those who have the key.

Besides the forms and offices of general use in the Church, there are, and have been, local rites, which it may have been, and may still be, expedient to suppress in favour of a wider uniformity; but of these there ought to be kept the most careful record. The dance before the altar, which still, I believe, is performed during Mass in some churches of Spain; the presentation, in other "local rites," to the officiating priest of the bread by a maiden and of the wine by a youth; and the like "customs" are all acted words of more or less significance, and are sometimes more interpretative of the Church's doctrine than any written speech.

Of course, the enlightened students of the magazines will laugh at the notion that there is any knowledge which can or ought, for their own sakes, to be concealed from them. I must content myself with the perhaps irrelevant remark that those who have hitherto been reputed the wisest have, in all ages, used and recommended such reticence, and would have understood and commended Aristotle when, in reply to Alexander's complaint that, in a certain book, the philosopher had published "secrets," he said: "They are published and not published, for none will learn from my book anything but that which he already knows." And I will add that neither in ancient nor in modern times has there been a poet, worthy of that sacred name, who would not have been horrified had he fancied that the full meaning of some of his sayings could be discerned by more than ten in ten thousand of his readers.

The denial by Mr. Grote and his followers that

there is any parabolic or enigmatic meaning in the ancient mythologies is a most astounding proof of how men, of common sense in most things, will persistently deny, in the face of what ought to be absolutely convincing evidence to the contrary, that there may be anything to be understood in that which they cannot understand. It must be conceded, of course, that the teaching, if teaching be intended, in the Greek myths, is most unsystematic, and that the successive additions and modifications of the Homeric mythology, introduced by the Hesiodic and Orphic schools, brought in much confusion of names and attributes; but what is this against the presumption of a generally intelligent character in a mass of stories which, if it does not consist mainly of riddles, is as amazing, in its alternative character of incongruous nonsense, as the most enthusiastic neo-Platonist would have it to be in the character of a storehouse of psychological observation, a *Summa Theologiæ* of the great religion of which *Scire teipsum* was the first injunction, as it is, indeed, of Christianity. That Lord Bacon, and many others before and after him, should have given, as Taylor the Platonist says, "frigid and trifling interpretations" of the Greek myths, is surely no excuse to Mr. Grote and others for maintaining that a riddle, which is on the very face of it a riddle, has no answer.

On the other hand, what rational mind can see anything irrational in the belief that, to a race ardently believing in the Divine and in the capacity of man for Divine communications, every god and goddess represented a particular aspect of divinity towards the

soul; and the soul, in each of its moods, activities, and capacities, some goddess or mistress of the gods; and that the adventures of gods, goddesses, nymphs, and heroes should often be parables of the phenomena of interior experience, experience too pure and subtle for common acquisition, and too sacred to be exposed to vulgar curiosity? And who are the best authorities upon the question, whether such significance was intended or not? Shall we follow Mr. Grote and the modern "scientists," with their "congenital incapacity" for spiritual realities, or Æschylus and a hundred others before him, who averred that these stories were life-giving mysteries, and the law-givers of their time who decreed the punishment of death against those who should explain them to the multitude?

The charge so often brought against the Church of having drawn upon these sources of illustration ought to constitute one of her highest claims to the admiration of a "liberal" age; for it amounts to this, that she alone has dared to recognise truth as canonical, wheresoever it may be discovered, and that she has not hesitated to appropriate the gold and silver vessels of her enemies, when they, of all others, were found fittest to contain the corresponding goods of spiritual perception and truths deducible from her faith. Nay, was not the Vine itself "brought out of Egypt," which, "when it had taken root, filled the land" of her former captives, and vivified with the inebriation of natural and intelligible hope the faith that would otherwise have been too spiritual for man? The Church does not dwell so often and emphatically on the coming of Christ "out of Egypt" for no reason.

The designers of the first Cathedral of Christendom were not guilty of a ridiculous solecism when they placed an Egyptian obelisk at its entrance, or of utter vacuity of meaning when they inscribed it with the title, "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah."



#### IV

### ATTENTION

ATTENTION to realities, rather than the fear of God, is "the beginning of wisdom"; but it seems to be the last effort of which the minds, even of cultivated people, are at present capable. No good and excellent thing requiring the least act of sustained attention to reality has any chance of recognition among us; original insight is dead, and men can see only the things which others, in less hasty times, have seen before them, and even these they can scarcely be said to see with their own eyes. Were the *Divine Comedy* to appear for the first time now, it would never be heard of, except in the small-type notices of the literary papers in which the young man who criticises poetry—because he has not learned to do anything else—would hasten to avail himself of so rare an opportunity of being funny. The faculty of attention to a line of scientific reasoning is common enough. It is the capacity for looking steadily at realities worthy of being reasoned about which is wanting. Through this impotence of attention, psychology has come to be a science the first axiom of which is that there is no soul, a denial which seems commonly to be owing, not so much to the vicious

interest of corrupt passions, as to physical impatience of the attitude of attention demanded for the contemplation of human realities. Even the meats and wines of the epicure's table cannot be enjoyed without the habit of attention ; hence the epicure's table is no more. Wealthy givers of dinners now trust, with scarcely any danger of discredit, to their guests' swallowing with applause whatever dainties are set before them, provided the consequent headache or colic is not immediately referable to its cause.

Much less will the nectar and ambrosia of the natural affections, for example, yield their flavours to the palate "studious to eat and not to taste." Through want of attention, more often, perhaps, than through inveterate vice, how many tread into the mud, with the foolish hoof of their lusts, the very flowers after which they are for ever in frantic search ; and almost all men now bewail the impossibility of attaining the poor dolls which they dignify by the name of their "ideals," when Nature, "if we do but open and intend the eye," is always actually excelling every imagination of beauty ; and realities, far lovelier than any "ideal," stand about us, willing to be wooed and longing to be won.

At least once in a lifetime, and by some hitherto unexplained awakening of full attention for a little while, what man but has seen a woman, and what woman a man, before whom all their previous "ideals" have paled ; and if, by subsequent nearness, they get within the eyes' focus and the vision is dimmed, that is the fault of the eyes, and no discredit to the reality of the thing seen, as is proved by the way in which death

restores the focus, and with it the vision. Attention, however, as multitudes have confessed with fruitless tears, would have adapted the focus of the eye to the nearness of the object, and made it more, not less, lovely by closer inspection.

Through inattention to their own true desires and capacities, men walk, as in a dream, among the trees of the Hesperides, hung with fruit the least savour of which includes the summed sweetness of all the flesh-pots of Egypt, yet so far surpasses it as, once tasted, to supersede for ever the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life ; but they do not dream of plucking them. The letter of Scripture is like the walls of a furnace, unsightly, and made of clay, but, to those who attend, full of chinks and crevices through which glows the white heat of a life whose mysteries of felicity it is "unlawful to utter"; but religious people are in too great a hurry of spirit to see anything but the clay walls, and they lead mean and miserable existences while loudly professing the faith which "hath the promise of this life also."

The hour or half-hour of daily "meditation," or attention to his own business, which used to be the practice of every good man, is now unheard of unless it be in Monasteries. The best among us, wholly unconscious that men can advance the world's improvement only by attending to their own, are busy about everything but that which concerns themselves, and after their dusty and profitless day's work they go, as Coleridge says, to the Divine Muses for *a-musement*. Hence, among many other unprecedented phenomena of our day, there is an almost complete lack of men of

letters. We have only newspaper, magazine, and booksellers' hacks; clever enough, indeed, but without insight, character, or any care for, or desire to propagate, a knowledge of the true realities and delight of life.

Yet how vast are the rewards of a habit of attention, and how joyful an answer can the few who still practise it give to Wordsworth's question :—

“Paradise and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic main—why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was?  
For the discerning intellect of man,  
When wedded to this goodly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.”

The habit, however, of such attention to realities as I am speaking of, is not to be formed without pain in those who have it not, unless they are possessed of mind and conscience, and something of the spirit of the child, that—

“Mighty Prophet, Seer blest,  
On whom those truths do rest,  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find.”

The soul which wants these qualifications, and has long dwelt easily and pleasantly and, perhaps, without external offence in unrealities, finds itself, when it endeavours to face reality, filled with an anguish of impatience, and rushes to and fro in the prison of its customs like a caged wild beast. There are thousands, however, who are not altogether so disqualified; and these, if they only looked, would “see in part and

know in part" those eternal entities which, if not so seen and known now, will never be seen and known. "Blessed," cries the Substantial Wisdom, "is he who explains me"; adding, in words of piercing but disregarded sweetness of invitation: "*Deliciæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum.*" With her, as with a mortal mistress, the one unpardonable crime is want of "attention."

It is not to be supposed, however, that the celestial secrets with which she rewards her steadfast votaries are to be attained, even by such as are naturally not disqualified, without considerable sacrifice of meaner goods. In the eyes of fools there is no such foolishness as the knowledge of things of which they know and can know nothing; and from such he who attends faithfully to his own true business will probably have much to suffer; for they will not be content with despising him for his infatuations, but they will hate him and do him what harm they can. He will also have to sequester himself from many natural and innocent interests and pleasures, in order to have time for the great learning, which is usually of slow acquisition, and the result of patient listening and of the hardly acquired habit of suspending *active thought*, which is the greatest of all enemies to *attention*; for "good thoughts are the free children of God, and do not come by thinking." He will also have to suffer from ordinarily good and well-intentioned people the charge of narrowness of benevolence as well as of intellect; for he will have no time or energy to spare for seeking out and serving other objects of charity, seeing that the knowledge of his own supreme needs will be increased by every day's addition to his immense but in-

communicable treasure; incommunicable, indeed, now, but, as he learns from the Church, an addition to the everlasting treasure of all who are united with him in the "Body of Christ." Not that he will really be inoperative in the time being for good to others; for the mere life, however retired, of one inhabital communion with Wisdom, breathes forth a sphere of wisdom which extends far beyond its definable bounds; and, as for the "narrowness" with which he is charged, he may answer that the power of cleaving is in proportion to the narrowness of the edge and the weight at its back; and that the least of his words or actions may be of more effect in the world than the life's labour of any of the herd of good people who are "busied about much serving," instead of sitting attentive at the feet of Truth.

## V

### CHRISTIANITY AN EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

CHRISTIANITY is an experimental science, and the best answer to one who questions, If it be true, is, Try it. But one difference between this and other experimental sciences is, that the necessary course of experiment is almost always, in the beginning at least, extremely difficult, painful, and repugnant to nature. Another is, that the result, though, provided this course be conducted with full sincerity and patience, sure to be absolutely convincing to the experimentalist, will not be wholly communicable or convincing to anybody else. It will give, indeed, to the person who has attained it, certain characteristics of manner, speech, and action which will strongly tend to impress any honest man that the experiment may be worth trying on his own behalf; but that is all.

The experiments and conclusions of the natural sciences can be discerned and judged by the natural senses, which all men have in common, and which have no interest in being blind to the facts of nature. But the spiritual senses, except in the exceedingly rare cases of some men of genius, in whom they appear to exist independently of the moral perfection



which is their commonly indispensable condition, have scarcely any life in the great mass of men, who live, often virtuously, or at least decorously, contented with knowing and enjoying only in their natural shadows those realities which are devoutly and substantially discerned by that higher order of perception which is usually the ultimate reward of so "doing God's commandments" that we may "know of the doctrine."

The multitude, Catholic and otherwise, who are, as Sir Thomas Browne says, "incapable of perfectness," have branded this science with the name of "mysticism." Cardinal Wiseman, accepting the name, defines "mysticism" as being "the science of love." What wonder if experimental knowledge in this science should be scarcely at all accessible to the vast majority of souls, in whom the seed of love has never yet passed beyond its rudimentary and apparently opposite state of fear, and who really regard the very notion of personal love to God and delight in communion with Him as a sort of irreverence—which, in them, indeed, it would be! There is, in fact, no Church but one which, as a rule, ventures even to propose this kind of love as the end and crown of its teaching. St. Evremond says that the most characteristic difference between that Church and all others is that, while the one makes it the ambition of the soul to please Him, the others seek only to avoid displeasing Him; love being the principle in the one case, fear in the other. The "science of love" is, indeed, "mysticism" to the many who fancy its experiences—incommunicable as the odour of a violet to those who have never smelt one—to be those of

idiosyncratical enthusiasm or infatuation ; but, among "mystics" themselves, the terms of this science are common property. Deep calleth unto deep a prophecy which is not of "private interpretation," but one which has a language as clear as is that of the sciences of the dust, and as strict a consensus of orthodoxy. A St. Catherine of Genoa and a St. John of the Cross know each what the other is saying, though, to a Huxley or a Morley, it is but a hooting of owls.

There are infinite degrees of this experimental knowledge, from that first sensible "touch" of God's love, which usually accompanies the first sincere intention of perfection for His sake, to that of the Saints who have united themselves to God by a series of agonising initiations of self-sacrifice, and by years of actual and habitual perfection of obedience in the smallest as well as the greatest things ; and, further still, to the knowledge of the angels, whose purification and consequent capacity goes on increasing for ever. But the very first sincere experiment, and its perceptible result, though they may be followed by years and years of relapse and seeming failure, are generally final. The man who has made the experiment has seen God ; and that is an event which he will never be able altogether to forget or deny, a positive fact which, for reality and self-evidence, stands alone in his experience, and which no amount of negative evidence will be able, even for a moment, to obscure.

For this first experiment of faith, a belief in a personal God and in His right to command and judge

us, is the only dogmatic ground which is required, and this ground almost every form of religion affords; and that "touch" of love which, as the Church says, "supersedes all the sacraments," is given to each one, who, with all his heart, even for an hour, submits himself to the guidance of the "Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world." If his memory clings, with however poor a fidelity, to that first kiss of God, that baptism of fire which is the tacit knowledge of the Incarnation—for is it not God made one with his body, *i.e.* his senses?—that initiating perception that God *is* will lead him into further actual illumination in proportion to his fidelity and to the amount of Catholic dogma which his particular Church may be capable of teaching—for fidelity does not discover dogma, but only enables the faithful, in proportion to their faith, to confirm it with absolute personal assurance. *False* dogmas cannot be believed with this experimental certainty because they do not represent realities; therefore such dogmas will not be believed by any one who has seen God, in such a way as finally to hinder the saving power of the true teaching. Thus, in Churches and sects which teach dogmas in themselves subversive of all morality and right belief in God's nature and government, we find individuals so deeply rooted in the fundamental orthodoxy of love, that, while daily professing with their mouths the immoral and pernicious doctrines of their sect, they so deny these doctrines in their hearts and lives, that the only harm—a very great one indeed—which befalls them from this position, is the impossibility of adequately developing their own nature.

Each great Catholic dogma is the key, and the only key, to some great mystery, or series of mysteries, in humanity; and, this dogma wanting, the humanity of the individual is so far deprived of the means of eternal development; which must be initiated in this life, if at all. But, in any case, provided he has attained "to lay his just hand on that golden key which opes the palace of eternity," by absolute fidelity to his best light, the *truths*, which he has adopted by faith, become "*res visa et cognita*," in a sense of which Lord Bacon did not dream; for Lord Bacon's "philosophy," as philosophy, was even baser than his political career, and it did not deal with "things," which are the objects of Wisdom, but with phenomena, which are only hints and corroborations of realities discovered by that which is philosophy indeed.

A duck-pond, however, must not be expected to grow salmon or pike, and the offspring of the conventicle will always remain narrow in the possibilities of experimental knowledge as compared with those who have been fed in the larger waters which occasionally bring forth a Hooker or a Keble, as again these are when compared with the ocean-brood of Austins, Bernards, and Theresas.

But, wherever the elementary dogmas of Christianity are taught, there the man who is *perfectly* sincere and faithful is in the possibility of an infinitely precious experimental knowledge; and that knowledge, however limited (and the knowledge even of the angels is limited), will fit him for his destined place in the communion of Saints, and may raise him far higher in God's favour than other Saints who may have dis-

cerned and loved a wider truth, truly, indeed, but with less intensity. Such men are Christ's beloved "poor" (not the world's "poor," who are quite as proud, vicious, luxurious, and covetous of this world's goods as the world's "rich"), and, though they have been fed only with crumbs from the table of those who sit at feasts of the fullest orthodoxy, such crumbs will nourish in them a life which the merely "wise and learned" in the letter of divine truth can never know.

To such a man the Incarnation becomes, not the central dogma of his faith, but the central fact of his experience; for it is going on perceptibly in himself; the Trinity becomes the only and self-evident explanation of mysteries which are daily wrought in his own complex nature, the result of the *fiat*: "Let us make man in our own image;" and he finds in his soul and body the answer to the prayer, "Let me so behold Thy presence in righteousness, that I may wake up after Thy likeness and be satisfied with it." Like Teiresias, he has seen the unveiled wisdom, and thenceforth can see nothing else; his guide is thenceforward, not formal laws or truths which can be uttered, but the golden rod of a supreme good, which leads him infallibly (and most sensibly) by glowing into greater felicity so long as he is in the right path, and by fading, more or less, as he is in danger of error. Like Teiresias, again, on the mountain heights of contemplation persevered in through years and years, he strikes, from time to time, with his golden staff upon interwoven mysteries of nature, and finds in them the revelation of undreamt-of secrets of his own

being; and he finally becomes, not so much an adorer as an actual participator in the nature and felicity of that Divinity which alone "has fruition in Himself," and "who became man that men might become gods."

## VI

### “A PEOPLE OF A STAMMERING TONGUE”

**I**N things of the spirit we can only “know in part and see in part” and “as in a glass darkly.” Hence, in writing concerning these things, the aphoristic manner always has been and always will be found the most proper and fructifying. In spiritual philosophy the blessing of systematic perfection has ever been paid for by the curse of barrenness; for between the facts of the science of the soul there is often no visible continuity and sometimes an appearance of contradiction; and in such cases we have to be contented with the simple perception and affirmation that they *are*. Again, such facts, in proportion to their importance, are simple and self-evident; and, in proportion to their simplicity and self-evidence, they are, as Aristotle says, apart from the domain of the reasoning faculty, and therefore unintelligible and incredible to those who have acquired the habit of relying, not upon reason, but upon reasoning, for proof. Nothing can be more express than the way in which this is over and over again asserted and implied by Our Lord and His Apostles. “None can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the



Holy Ghost," that is, by the spirit of direct vision. "I tell you these things, not because ye know them not, but because ye know them." "The Holy Ghost shall *teach* you whatsoever I shall have *said* unto you," etc.

Dogmatic truth is the key and the soul of man is the lock ; the proof of the key is in its opening of the lock ; and, if it does that, all other evidence of its authenticity is superfluous, and all attempts to disprove it are absurd in the eyes of a sensible person. That only a very small proportion of the human race should be capable of at once receiving self-evident truth is quite natural. The key is not less the key because it will not open a lock of which the wards are filled with stones and rusted by disuse or destroyed by sin. "Authority" comes in here. When a man "speaking with authority," that is, with the indescribable air and character which is an unmistakable claim to being listened to, affirms things beyond all ordinary experience and credibility, and adds that it is only by "doing the commandments" that we can "know of the doctrine," a sincere and businesslike mind will at least consider the experiment of that moral perfection, to which such wonderful things are promised, worth trying ; and, if he tries with full integrity of purpose and persistence, all persons who have reached that perfection assure us that he will not fail to attain to that direct vision to which truths, received on "authority" as "dogmas," gradually become discernible as *facts*, "infinitely visible and credible" (as St. Augustine says of God) and of incomparable personal interest to himself. The in-

finite visibility and credibility of such facts imply a counterpart of infinite invisibility and incredibility.

"The angels themselves desire to look into these things" and to fathom them fully, but in vain. The higher they soar in the light of vision the more manifestly incomplete and "unsystematic" is their theology; and their knowledge becomes more and more merely and absolutely "nuptial knowledge," that is, the knowledge of fruition, for which there is no intelligible word nor "reason."

When the soul has passed the "purgative" stage of obedience to law, and has attained the "unitive" condition, in which all fidelity is habitual and comparatively easy, she becomes capable, for the first time, of real "insight," and knowledge ceases to be acceptance of "dogma" so much as personal communion. She exclaims, "The Lord hath fashioned me and laid his hand upon me"; but she adds, "Such knowledge is too excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it"; and the utterances whereby she endeavours to draw others to her wisdom are interjections, doxologies, parables, and aphorisms, which have no connecting unity but that of a common heat and light.

Another reason for the inadequacy of expression in the science of the soul is the "unlawfulness" of speech concerning some of its most essential facts. St. Paul, in his vision, says he saw things which it was, not impossible, but "unlawful" to utter. Again, the spectators of the Transfiguration were commanded not to tell the Vision to any man until Christ should be risen, that is, until Christ should be risen in their

auditor, it being lawful to speak of the mysteries revealed in that Vision only to those who already know. Again, the Bridegroom of the soul loves to reserve to Himself the office of her instructor in His secrets; and the more she has learned the less will she be willing to speak. "My secret to me," is the reply of the Saints to inquirers concerning their peculiar knowledge. "Night," says the Soul, "is the light of my pleasures," and she refuses by speech to obscure them with the darkness of day. Furthermore, her confession of such knowledge involves incurring the praise of man for having corresponded with peculiar fidelity to the graces of God; and she abhors the praises of any but Him, whose assurance that He "greatly desires her beauty" makes all lesser laudation profane and disgusting.

Besides the pride and modesty of the pure soul, there is yet another reason why those who know most speak least. There comes a time to those who follow perfection, in which all possible forms of beauty are, as it were, discerned at once; it is not beautiful things, but Beauty itself which is perceived; and in the light of this faint aurora of the great and unspeakable vision, all particular forms of beauty, such as quicken the tongue of Art, fail to arrest interest and attention and to excite the desire of communicating them to others. A sculptor who could see, at one moment, all the possible forms of beauty which might be wrought from his block of marble would be quite unanxious and unable to develop any one of them.

## VII

### THE BOW SET IN THE CLOUD

IT may be a matter of surprise to many that I, professing to be an orthodox Christian, should frequently use language which seems to assume that some knowledge of Christian mysteries has been enjoyed by individuals in all times and places; that the light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world shone, more or less obscurely, before the days of Him who came to bring light into the world; but this is a belief and a conviction which is growing more and more general with the growing light which the contemplations of Saints and Doctors have cast upon Catholic doctrine; and it need present no great difficulty to the mind, however scrupulous to keep within safe limits of faith, if it be borne in remembrance that the Incarnation was an act done in eternity as well as time; that the Lamb, the "I am before Abraham was," was "slain from the beginning"; and that, if we look from the point of view of eternity, we may see that effects of that act, apparently retrospective, were not really so; but that the Bread and Wine, without which "there is no life in us," may have been received from the hand of an invisible Melchisedech by many who, in time, have

longed to see the Day of the Lord, and have done their best, by heroic purity and self-humiliation, to merit the Vision, and have thus attained to that love which, as St. Augustine says, "supersedes all the sacraments."

Nor do glimpses of the heavenly vision seem to have been absolutely denied to any race of men. The general "darkness that comprehendeth it not" seems occasionally to have been lifted among races whose night is by most good people presumed to be total. The religious rites of "savage" nations sometimes startle those who know the meaning of the rites of the Church by a strange identity of significance. God's mercy is over all His works, and He does not refuse to such babes and sucklings some effectual hints of that knowledge which is especially promised to babes and sucklings, and denied to the wise and learned. Finally, let me note that the anthropomorphic character, which so universally marks the religion of the simple and is so great a scandal to the "wise," may be regarded as a remote confession of the Incarnation, a saving instinct of the fact that a God who is not a man is, for man, no God.

The mystery of triple Personality in one Being, the acknowledgment of which is the prime condition of a real apprehension of God, may be best approached by the human mind under the analogue of difference of sex in one entity; as it was by Plato and by much earlier Greek Philosophers, and, more or less obscurely, by the "wise ancients" of India and Egypt, and, for the first time, quite clearly shadowed forth by the Scriptures and the Church; Nature herself

adding her crowning witness, without which men are incapable of effectually grasping any spiritual truths. "In the beginning" (*i.e.* before men had lost their original knowledge of God and His Image in Man) "there were," says Plato, "three sexes." The saying, "God is a beautiful Youth and a Divine nymph" is attributed to Orpheus. By the Church the Second Person is represented as the "glory" of the "Father," who is Christ's "Head," as Man is the glory of his Head, Christ, and Woman the glory of Man, who is her head. The individual Man, the *homo*, is the Image of God in so far as he is a substantial reflection of the Love, the Truth, and the Life, which last is the "embrace" of Truth and Love, as the Holy Spirit is said by the Church to be the "embrace" of the First Person and the Second. And nature goes on giving echoes of the same living triplicity in animal, plant, and mineral, every stone and material atom owing its being to the synthesis or "embrace" of the two opposed forces of expansion and contraction. Nothing whatever exists in a single entity but in virtue of its being thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, and in humanity and natural life this takes the form of sex, the masculine, the feminine, and the neuter, or third, forgotten sex spoken of by Plato, which is not the absence of the life of sex, but its fulfilment and power, as the electric fire is the fulfilment and power of positive and negative in their "embrace."

Man (*homo*), according to the writer of Genesis, originally contained the woman, and was in his individual self the synthesis; and the separation into distinct bodies has been regarded by some theologians

as a consequence of the fall, from which the regenerated will recover in that state in which there is no giving or receiving in marriage, man (*homo*) himself *being* a marriage and "as the angels in heaven,"—a change which is already foreshadowed in the "Brides of Christ" by that which is their most sensible characteristic, namely, a marked increase of the feminine nature, which is passive, humble, receptive, sensitive, and responsive; this increase, however, so far from being at the expense of the masculine character, that this latter is exalted into fuller strength, invincible courage, and greater wisdom to command all that is below him, especially his own feminine nature—whose rebellions, in his natural condition, are the cause of all his disasters.

"Receive thy glory" (womanhood "the glory of the man") "with joy," says St. Paul to those who had newly seen the unveiled wisdom; and, in the wonderful parable of Teiresias, that change or rather discovery in his own nature was the first effect of the same vision, which blinded him, as it does any one who has beheld it, to all other objects of sight. This three-coloured Iris (the "Messenger of Juno," the Divine womanhood) is also the "Bow set in the cloud" of the renewed nature, for a promise that it shall never again be overwhelmed and destroyed by the deluge of the disordered senses.

According to Christian theology, it was the Second Person, the "glory" of God the Father, who took on actual womanhood or "body" in the body of the Blessed Virgin, and who imparts the same to all who partake of the same body in the Holy Sacrament;



and accordingly it is said by St. Augustine, that "Christ is the Bride as well as the Bridegroom, for He is the Body"; and St. John of the Cross says that, in the last heights of contemplation, man attains to contemplate Him as the Bride, an attainment corresponding to the second change of Teiresias after his seven years of meditation on the first.

## VIII

### CHRISTIANITY AND "PROGRESS"

MANY people doubt whether Christianity has done much, or even anything, for the "progress" of the human race as a race; and there is more to be said in defence of such doubt than most good people suppose. Indeed, the expression of this doubt is very widely regarded as shocking and irreligious, and as condemnatory of Christianity altogether. It is considered to be equivalent to an assertion that Christianity has hitherto proved a "failure." But some who do not consider that Christianity has proved a failure, do, nevertheless, hold that it is open to question whether the race, as a race, has been much affected by it, and whether the external and visible evil and good which have come of it do not pretty nearly balance one another.

As to the question of the real failure or success of Christianity, that must be settled by considering the purpose of its Founder. Did He come into the world, live and die for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," as that is commonly understood, and as it constitutes the end of civil government? Was it His main purpose, or any part of His purpose, that everybody should have plenty to eat and drink, comfortable

houses, and not too much to do? If so, Communism must be allowed to have more to say for itself, on religious grounds, than most good Christians would like to admit. Did He expect or prophesy any great and general amelioration of the world, material or even moral, from His coming? If not, then it cannot be said that Christianity has failed because these and other like things have not come of it. In these days all truth is shocking; and it is to be feared that the majority of good people may feel shocked by the denial, even in His own words, that such ends had anything more than an accidental part in His purpose or expectation. He and His Apostles did not prophesy that the world would get better and happier for His life, death, and teaching; but rather that it would become intolerably worse. He foretells that the world will continue to persecute such as dare to be greatly good, and that it will consider that it does God service in killing them. He tells us that the poor will be always with us, and does not hint disapproval of the institution even of slavery, though He counsels the slave to be content with his status. His mission is most clearly declared to be wholly individual and wholly unconcerned with the temporal good of the individual, except in so far as "faith hath the promise of this life also"; and moreover, what is yet more "shocking" to modern sensibilities, He very clearly declared that, though He lived and died to give all a chance, the number of individuals to be actually benefited by His having done so would be few; so that it was practically for these few only that He lived and died. That may be very shocking; but they are *His* words, and

not mine, and those who do not like them should have a special edition of the New Testament revised for their own use, from which all disagreeable references to the many called and few chosen, the narrow way which few find, the broad road generally taken, and the end it leads to, etc., etc., should be excised. It is not to be denied that our Lord's doctrine must be in the highest degree unpleasant to all who will consider what it really is, and who have not the courage either to reject it or adopt it in a whole-hearted manner.

But has Christianity failed in doing that which alone it professed to do? It has not improved and has not professed to improve bad or even indifferently good people who form the mass of mankind, but it does profess to do great things when it is received in "a good and honest heart," that is, in the heart—according to Hamlet's estimate—of about one in ten thousand. The question, then, of failure or success narrows itself to this: Has Christianity done great things, infinitely great things; and has it all along been doing, and is it now doing, such things, for the very small proportion of mankind with which it professes to be effectually concerned? Professor Huxley says frankly, No. It emasculates and vitiates human character; and he exemplifies his position by the example of the Saints of the order of St. Francis. It is well to have such a good, bold statement of opinion. Here is no shilly-shallying, and we now know that there are some persons, of strong common sense, who think that Christianity *is* a failure, as having failed to carry out its professions. Few

persons who are in their right wits would choose to seek a fencing-match with Professor Huxley. They might be altogether in the right, and yet, as Sir Thomas Browne says, they might come off second best in the conflict. In any case, it is not at present my affair. It is enough for me to point out that it is conceivable that there are sciences, even "experimental" sciences, in which Professor Huxley has not yet qualified himself to be considered as an expert. Christianity professes to be such a science, a strictly experimental science, only differing, in this character, from chemistry, inasmuch as the experiments and their conditions can, in the one case, be easily fulfilled and judged by the senses which are common to all men; whereas, in the other, they are *professedly* to be fulfilled and judged of by few. Here, again, come in those unpleasant assertions of the founders of Christianity: "None can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost"; "Do my commandments and ye shall know of the doctrine," etc., etc. —*i.e.* the experiment is *professedly* to be made only with great difficulty and self-denial, and its results can be judged solely by a spirit or sense which is only attainable, or which is, at least, only attained by a few.

The conclusion is this, then, that even if Christianity—as I do not assert—has not sensibly affected "progress," or has affected it as much for the worse in some directions as for the better in others, and has not even done much individual good in more than a very small proportion even of those who call themselves Christians, it has only not done what it never professed

to do. But has it done what it actually professed to do? That is a question of which the affirmative might be difficult of absolute and generally intelligible *proof*, but of which the negative must, I apprehend, be considered absurd even by the great majority of those who have never dreamed of qualifying themselves to become final judges of such matters.

There are many passages in Scripture which will readily occur to every reader as being on the surface in contradiction to this limitation by our Lord's own words of the primary purpose of Christianity; but those who know how orphaned and widowed of truth even the best of us are, and how the destitution we may discover in ourselves is greater than that we can know of in any others, will discern, with the earlier and deeper interpreters of the words of our Lord and His Apostles, that there are two ways of reading their exhortations to help the poor and the declaration that to visit the orphan and the widow is "pure religion and undefiled," and they will understand that neighbourly service, which is usually (but not always) an inseparable accidental duty of Christian life, is very far indeed from being of primary consequence, though the rendering, or not rendering of it—where there is no knowledge of a nobler service—may seriously affect the shallow heavens and the shallow hells of the feebly good and the feebly wicked. Let not such as these exalt themselves against the great Masters of the experimental science of Life, one of whom—St. Theresa, if I remember rightly—declares that more good is done by one minute of reciprocal contemplative communion of love with God than by the founding of fifty hospitals

or of fifty churches. "The elect soul," says another great experimentalist, St. Francis of Sales, "is a beautiful and beloved lady, of whom God demands not the indignity of service, but desires only her society and her person."



## IX

### SIMPLICITY

THERE are three simplicities; that of the child, "On whom those truths do rest which we are toiling all our lives to find"; the simplicity of genius; and the simplicity of wisdom. "The single eye, which makes the body full of light"—in modern phrase, the synthetical faculty and habit—is the essential character of all simplicity, and it is never separated from a certain innocence and *naïveté*; and quiescence or perfection of conscience appear to be its conditions. The paradisaical, or synthetic, vision in the child is conditioned by the innocence of ignorance and its inevitable freedom from the habit of analysis; the mind of the child goes forth into particulars with a congenital discernment of the living unity of which the child itself is, as yet, a part; and it continues so to go forth until it falls into some disorder of will or understanding or both, which is separation from that unity, and extinction of "the single eye." Genius consists wholly in the possession of the divine faculty of synthetic or unitive apprehension, in maturer years, and in company with consciousness or the power of reflection.] This possession is so exceedingly rare, whole nations and generations having existed without

producing a single noticeable instance of it, that it must be regarded, not as the natural culmination of humanity, but as a splendid and fortunate anomaly, or departure from the law of the race. In some few of the very few, indeed, it seems to have been in natural order, the simplicity and purity of childhood having been retained and developed through life, until it has become the simplicity of wisdom; but no one who has made himself acquainted with the lives of men of genius can fail to have observed that a concomitant of their wonderful privilege has usually been a certain dislocation and startling disproportion in faculty and character. Simplicity or *naïveté*, as Lessing remarks, has invariably more or less characterised them and their work; but, in most instances they seem, if one may say so, to have had no moral right to this singular grace, and even sometimes to have preserved or attained it by bold denial or by mere oblivion of its natural conditions—an oblivion not unfrequently amounting to moral insanity. It has, in such cases, been like the precious gum, or profuse flush of flower, which comes of disease in the tree. The three constituent parts of man, the intellect, will, and perception, in such cases, do not act together, as they do in healthy persons, but the exorbitancy of perception seems to be the result of a lethargy of intellect and will which leaves the whole energy of life to go forth into perception, as it does in the child through like conditions, conditions which in the child, however, are the right order of its being. The past century, which has been so extraordinarily productive of men of genius, has produced a more than usual

proportion of those in whom genius has been the concomitant of mental and moral defect and disorder. The works of such men are marked by exceeding inequality, deserts of dulness as in Coleridge, or of mere imbecility as in Blake, occasionally and suddenly blossoming as the rose, or the intermittent flush of beauty and fictitious health in the face of one dying of decline.

There is another kind of simplicity, which is endowed, like the others, with the synthetic eye, and which is the only kind that is of much abiding value to its possessor; namely, the simplicity of wisdom. This is rarely found except in persons of advanced years. The simplicity of age is the blossom of which that of childhood is the bud and almost always failing promise. Its great condition is innocence, which has been retained through, or recovered during, the struggles and temptations of manhood; and, as the innocence of knowledge is far nobler than that of infantine ignorance, so its reward, the unitive vision, has an immeasurably wider field. Such men, at seventy, see again the daisy as they saw it when they were seven; but a universe of realities, unknown in childhood, is discerned by them as a single flower of which each particular reality is a petal; and the life-long unconscious analysis, which has been to other men corruption, has only provided them with a vaster prospect of the elemental integrity, and an inexhaustible source of joy, which, like that of the "young-eyed cherubim," is too grave for smiles.

## X

### ANCIENT AND MODERN IDEAS OF PURITY

FEW persons who are not scholars have any knowledge of the difference which there is between ancient and modern ideas of purity, and few moralists have considered or admitted how very largely the comparison, if fairly made, must tell in favour of the ancients, who may be reckoned, in this matter, to have ceased about the time of the Reformation. As it was impurity which first brought fig-leaves into fashion, so the wonderful and altogether unprecedented addiction to that fashion, during the past three hundred years, may be taken as a fair measure of what puritanism has done, during that period, for us, and is still doing,—still doing, for, within the last few years, the actual fig-leaf has invaded the Vatican itself; and even there we are no longer allowed to contemplate “the human form divine,” unprofaned by reminders of the niceness of nasty thinkers.

If we go back to those first ages of Christianity—which modern good people, who know nothing about them, regard with such reverence—we shall find that the greatest and purest of the “Fathers of the Church” were in the practice of addressing their flocks with an

outspokenness which is not surpassed even by the ancient expounders of the Eleusinian and Bacchic mysteries, or, for that matter, by the Bible itself. St. Augustine, for example, in the *City of God* and elsewhere, says things fit to throw decent people into convulsions; and nowhere, in ancient Christian writings, do we find ignorance regarded as even a part, much less the whole, of innocence:—witness the words of Her, who is the model of innocence to all ages, in her answer, at thirteen years of age, to the message of Gabriel.

Strange to say, this modern notion of purity is not limited to those Churches which owe their origin to the Reformation. Their spirit has so deeply infected the Mother Church that, though her abstract doctrine remains the same as it was, she practically enforces the negative idea as jealously as it is enforced among good Protestants, or even more jealously, so that the ancient idea of positive purity, as a sacred fire which consumes and turns into its own substance all that is adverse to it, is now replaced by the conception that it is of the nature of stored snow, which must be kept artificially dark and cool, lest it disappear for ever. “Why, papa, I thought that marriage was rather a wicked sacrament!” said a young lady, who had been brought up at one of the best convent schools in England, the other day to her father, when he happened to be praising that institution. And in the great English Catholic Colleges for boys, the wonderful phenomenon may now be seen of two or three hundred lads and young men whose minds, with regard to the relations of the sexes, are exactly in the

same condition as those of the girls, and whose only idea of marriage—gathered from the shyness with which the whole subject is avoided by all about them—is, that it is “rather a wicked sacrament.” The prolongation of the innocence of ignorance into advanced youth would probably be unmixed gain were it not that knowledge, being left to come by accident, is almost sure to become poisoned in the moment of acquisition. It is of little use calling the legitimate connexion of the sexes a “great sacrament,” if no pains are taken to identify the knowledge of that connexion with the knowledge of what is meant by a sacrament, this later knowledge being the ground of the immense difference between the pagan and Christian views of marriage, and if the essential sanctity of chastity, married or unmarried, is left to be discovered only by the obscuration of the conscience in its loss. The whole sphere of the doctrines of the early Church, like that of all the great mythologies, revolved about mysteries which the modern Churches, in practice, absolutely ignore, but which nature, however improved by grace, absolutely refuses to ignore. The result is a practical Manicheism, which is as serious in its effects upon morals as it is treasonous to the truth. The prodigious evils of unchastity prove sufficiently that chastity is no merely negative good. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. But where is the safeguard of purity if its corruption is imagined to be the corruption, not of the “best,” but of some shadowy and negative state? To avoid this immeasurable evil there should be prudent and bold plain-speaking on fitting occasions.

Plain-speaking does not vitiate. Even coarseness is health compared with those suppressed forms of the disease of impurity which come of our modern undivine silences.

A young man or woman must be hopelessly corrupt who would be injured by the freest reading of the Bible, or Shakespeare. The most pure and exalted love-poem that was ever written, Spenser's *Epithalamion* on his own marriage, is also one of the most "nude"; and all art-students "from the life" know that it is ingenious dress far more than the absence of dress that has dangerous attractions.

The boldest confession of the doctrine of the Incarnation, with all its corollaries, has been the father of that splendid virtue which was but dimly foreshown in pre-Christian ideas of purity. Wherever this doctrine has been denied or hesitatingly taught, it is a fact of simple experience that chastity has suffered with it. For what considerations can ordinary morals or the widest suggestions of worldly expediency substitute for those with which the New Testament abounds? "Bear and glorify God in your bodies"; "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot?" "God for the body, and the body for God," etc.



## XI

### CONSCIENCE

THE twofold constitution of man which, the more it is reflected upon, becomes the more manifest and wonderful, and seems more and more to approach the reality of a double personality in one being—the duality which the old theologians and philosophers recognised in speaking of man's nature as composed of a rational and of a sensitive, or of a male and female soul—is in nothing more obvious to persons who really consider their own business than in the phenomena of conscience. In every person who has a right to be called a person, as distinguished from an animal, there are two distinct consciences: the rational or male conscience, that commands him to act according to certain fixed laws which he knows or believes to be just and right; and the sensitive or female conscience, which persuades, indeed, to apparent good, but which, in default of habitual subordination to the virile conscience, does more harm in the world, although it is a sort of virtue, than is done by any vice. It is full of scruples about small things, and is often indifferent to great. Its chief care is for things present and external. To sympathise with and alleviate present and physical or emotional suffering and evils

often simply fanciful, and to forgive things which ought not to be forgiven, is the extent of its "charity"; and its character, in all but highly disciplined and robust minds, is to be in almost continual conflict with the rational conscience. So that the struggles of a really good man are not so much against evil, which, known to be such, does not attract him, as against the inexpedient good which his inferior conscience is perpetually recommending to him with the most confusing plausibility, and which, if it be not listened to, cries out against him with lamentations and reproaches, often hard to distinguish from the voice of his own proper guide. It is so especially when, as is mostly the case, this female objurgator charges him with refusing to make sacrifices which are not only uncalled for, but would be injurious to his own true welfare and that of others, if they were made. This conflict caused the Apostle to cry out, "The whole creation groaneth together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, to wit the redemption of the body"—the "body," the "woman," and the sensitive "soul" being synonyms to his mind as to that of all ancient philosophers. The sons of God—*i.e.* the true and faithful—however perfect in will and deed, cannot be "manifested" while they are thus in opposition to their sensitive life, which should be their helpmate and "glory" instead of their troublesome adversary and accuser. In some exceedingly small proportion of good people this glowing female conscience has been so persistently resisted and ordered by severe and undeviating obedience to "cold" and purely rational dictates, that such

persons are not only no longer troubled by the insubordination and contradictions of the sensitive nature, but they find themselves—often suddenly and unexpectedly—in more or less complete harmony and co-operation with her. She has submitted; and the true life, which had been hitherto arduous and full of trouble, is thenceforward full of the joy as well as the power of the Divine Spirit, she having become his “glory,” as she was before his accuser and shame, and the means instead of the hinderer of his “manifestation” as a “son of God.”

It must be repeated, however, that the inferior conscience is not a vice, but a virtue without sufficient light; and that it is far more likely to call for unnecessary labour and sacrifice and to suggest false and harassing scruples than to invite to ease and self-indulgence. The *false* conscience, by which the mass of men justify to themselves their persistence in ignorance and self-seeking, or brace themselves to the difficult pursuit of unjust ends without regard to law, is a very different thing.

It should be remembered that even the truest conscience is not an illuminating power, though illumination is sure to follow obedience to it. It is a commanding voice, that bids all and compels some to follow their best attainable light; which being done, there is no sin, though there may be great and temporarily terrible error in such obedience. So much for the individual conscience. Let it be added that when a whole nation comes to be mainly guided by the female or sensitive conscience, so far as it has any conscience at all, then great disaster is not far off.

## XII

### REAL APPREHENSION

|| "MAN," says Dr. Newman, "is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal." To see rightly is the first of human qualities; right feeling and right acting are usually its consequences. There are two ways of seeing: one is to comprehend, which is to see all round a thing, or to embrace it; one is to apprehend, which is to see it in part, or to take hold of it. A thing may be really taken hold of which is much too big for embracing. Real apprehension implies reality in that which is apprehended. You cannot "take hold" of that which is nothing. The notional grasp which some people seem to have of clouds and mares' nests is a totally different thing from real apprehension; though what this difference is could scarcely be made clear to those who have no experience of the latter. A man may not be able to convey to another his real apprehension of a thing; but there will be something in his general character and way of discoursing which will convince you, if you too are a man acquainted with realities, that he has truly got hold of what he professes to have got hold of, and you will be wary of denying what he affirms. The

man of real apprehensions, or the truly sensible man, has no opinions. Many things may be dubious to him; but if he is compelled to act without knowledge, he does so promptly, being prompt to discern which of the doubtful ways before him is the least questionable, on the ground of such evidence as he has. As to what he sees to be true or right, he does not argue with the person who differs from him upon a vital point, but only avoids his company, or, if he be of an irascible temperament, feels inclined to knock him down. Of course there are some people who see things which do not exist; but this is lunacy, and beyond the scope of these remarks. Real apprehension is emphatically the quality which constitutes "good sense." Common good sense has a real apprehension of innumerable things which those who add to good sense learning and reflection may comprehend; but there is much that must for ever remain matter only of real apprehension to the best seers; that is to say, everything in which the infinite has a part, *i.e.* all religion, all virtue as distinguished from temporary expediency, the grounds of all true art, etc. A man may have an immense acquaintance with facts; he may have all history and the whole circle of the sciences on the tip of his tongue; he may be the author of a classical system of logic, or may have so cunningly elaborated a false theory of nature as to puzzle and infuriate the wisest of men: and yet may not really apprehend any part of the truth of life which is properly human knowledge. At the present time it is by politics chiefly that the difference between the two great classes of men is made apparent.

For the first time in English history, party limitations coincide almost exactly with the limitations which separate silly from sensible men. If you talk with a sincere Gladstonian—and, wonderful to say, there are still many such—you will soon find that he has no real apprehension of anything. He only feebly and foolishly opines.

It is not to be concluded from what has been said that the possession of the apprehending faculty in any way supersedes the good of learning. The power of really apprehending is nothing in the absence of realities to be apprehended. In the great field of ordinary social relationships and duties the subject-matter of such apprehension is largely supplied by individual experience, and the exercise by most men of that faculty is in the main limited to these; so that the praise of "good sense" has acquired a much narrower signification than it ought to bear. Genius is nothing but great good sense, or real apprehension, exercised upon objects more or less out of common sight; and the chief ingredient of even the highest and most heroic sanctity is the same apprehension taking hold upon spiritual truths and applying them to the conduct of the interior as well as the exterior life. Men with great strength of real apprehension are easily capable of things which inferior characters regard as great self-sacrifices. To such men such things are no more sacrifice than in an ordinary man it would be to exchange a ton of lead for a pound of gold. "Their hearts do not forget the things their eyes have seen;" and persons like General Gordon or Sir Thomas More would stare i

you called anything they did or suffered by the name of sacrifice.

You cannot read the writings of Newman, Hooker, Pascal and St. Augustine, without being strongly impressed with the presumption that they have a real apprehension of the things they profess to believe; and, since they do not justify in any other way the theory that they are lunatics, a right-minded reader is disposed to think that what they have thus seen exists, and that his not having seen such things does not materially diminish that probability.

And here it may be well to recur to the text of these remarks: "Man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal." All men properly so called—but a good many who walk upright on two legs cannot properly be so called—are seeing, feeling, and acting animals; but very few men, indeed, have as yet attained to be contemplating animals, though the act of contemplation exercised upon the highest objects is, according to all great philosophers, even pagan, the act for which Man is created and in which his final perfection and felicity are attained. The act of real apprehension, as it is exerted by ordinary men, and even for the most part by men of extraordinary vigour of intellectual vision, is momentary, however permanent may be its effect upon their principles and lives. Men of vigorous apprehension look at the heavens of truth, as it were, through a powerful telescope, and see instantly as realities many living lights which are quite invisible to the common eye. But contemplation—a faculty rare in all times, but wellnigh unheard



of in ours—is like the photographic plate which finds stars that no telescope can discover, by simply setting its passively expectant gaze in certain indicated directions so long and steadily that telescopically invisible bodies become apparent by accumulation of impression. Such men are prophets and apostles, whether canonical or not. It is by the instrumentality of such men that religions are established and upheld; and the term “verifiable religion” is a piece of mere nineteenth-century cant, when applied to the examination of dogma by such as have probably never had the remotest apprehension of any spiritual reality. Certain facts of history relating to religion may or may not be capable of “verification” to the multitude; but the dogmas which are the substance of a religion can be really apprehended—assuming them to be real and apprehensible—only by the exceedingly few to whom the highest powers of contemplation, which are usually the accompaniments of equally extraordinary virtues, are accorded. The mass of mankind must receive and hold these things as they daily receive and hold a thousand other things—laws, customs, traditions, the grounds of common moralities, etc.—by faith; their real apprehension in such matters extending for the most part only to the discernment of the reasonableness of so receiving and holding them.

Now this faculty and habit of really apprehending things, even in its lower and not uncommon degree, is an immeasurable advantage; but it has its drawback. Those who possess it are singularly capable of committing the unpardonable sin, the sin against know-

ledge. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" is a petition which He who spoke these words could not have offered for deeds or denials in clear opposition to what a man knows to be true and good. "My name is in him and he will not pardon." All men agree in calling the spirit of truth—which is the spirit by which truth is really apprehended—holy; and to deny this spirit in deliberate action may, without any appeal to Christian doctrine, be proved to be unpardonable by the way such action is known to influence a man's character. A single act of such denial, if it be in some great and vital matter, often seems to destroy the soul. History affords more than one example of a statesman who has begun life with an eagle eye for truth, a strong and tender love of honour, and everything that makes a man among men. At some crisis of temptation he chooses personal ambition before some clearly apprehended duty of patriotism; and his whole nature seems thenceforward changed: he drops like a scorched fly from the flame—

Then takes his doom, to limp and crawl,  
Blind and despised, from fall to fall.

But the least practical denial of real apprehension of the truth is, to such as have ever had a conscience and have observed themselves, demonstrably unpardonable, inasmuch as it destroys a portion of the capacity of the soul. "The remnant" may, indeed, "become a great nation," but it will be still and for ever a remnant of what it would have been, had it preserved the integrity of its fidelity.

If we knew the secrets of the lives of those—alas! innumerable—who seem to have no real apprehension of anything, none of the light which, it is said, lighteth every man that cometh into the world, it would probably be found that they have not been born without, but have forfeited, their noblest human heritage by repeated practical denials of the things which they have seen.

### XIII

## SEERS, THINKERS, AND TALKERS

### I

THE intellect, the understanding or discursive reason, and the memory, it need scarcely be said, are three distinct faculties; yet in their exercise and the character they acquire for their possessors, they are apt to be confused, and that not without damage to the public and private interests of those who make the mistake. Intellect, though it is constantly spoken of as synonymous with understanding, is really an incomparably rarer quality, the difference being that which subsists between "genius" and "talent"; and to ignorant persons a ready and well-stored memory, which is consistent with the almost total defect of either of the nobler faculties, is often regarded as a combination of both.

The intellect is the faculty of the "seer." It discerns truth as a living thing; and, according as it is in less or greater power, it discerns with a more or less far-seeing glance the relationships of principles to each other, and of facts, circumstances, and the realities of nature to principles, without anything that can be properly called ratiocination. It cannot be

① cultivated, as the understanding and memory can be and need to be; and it cannot in the ordinary course of things be injured, except by one means—namely, dishonesty, that is, habitual denial by the will, for the sake of interested or vicious motives, of its own perceptions. Genius and high moral—not necessarily physical—courage are therefore found to be constant companions. Indeed, it is difficult to say how far an absolute moral courage in acknowledging intuitions may not be of the very nature of genius: and whether it might not be described as a sort of interior sanctity which dares to see and confess to itself that it sees, though its vision should place it in a minority of one. Everybody feels that genius is, in a sort, infallible. That it is so, is indeed an “identical proposition.” So far as a man is not infallible in what he professes to see, he is not a man of genius—that is, he is not a seer. It is by no figure of speech that genius is called inspiration. Dr. Newman somewhere observes that St. Augustine and some of the primitive teachers of the Church wandered at will through all the mazes of theology with an intuitive orthodoxy of genius.

Although this faculty of direct vision is very rare in comparison with those of ordinary ratiocination and memory, it is not nearly so rare as is supposed by such as measure genius by its manifestations in philosophy, science, art, or statesmanship. For one seer who has the accomplishments and opportunities whereby his faculty can be turned to public account, there are scores and hundreds who possess and exercise for their private use their extraordinary perceptive powers.

To whom has it not happened, at one time or other, to witness the instantaneous shattering of some splendid edifice of reasoning and memory by the brief Socratic interrogation of some ignoramus who could see?

No mortal intellect or genius is other than very partial, and, even in that partial character, imperfect. Absolute genius would be nothing more nor less than the sight of all things at once in their relationship and origin; but the most imperfect genius has an infinite value—not only because it is actual sight of truth, but also and still more because it is a peculiar mode of seeing, a reflection of truth coloured but not obscured by the individual character, which in each man of genius is entirely unique. This unique character is, in its expression, what is called "style"—the sure mark of genius, though the world at large is unable to distinguish "style" from manner, or even from mannerism. Incomparably the highest and fortunately the least uncommon form of genius is wisdom in the conduct of life; for this form involves in a far greater degree than any other the constant exercise of that courage which is inseparable from genius. The saint is simply a person who has so strong and clear a sight of the truth which concerns him individually, and such courage to confess his vision, that he is always ready to become a "confessor" under any extremity of persecution.

*style  
truth*

True statesmanship is another form of wisdom in the conduct of life; and this is perhaps the rarest of all forms in which genius manifests itself, because it requires a combination of inferior faculties and oppor-

tunities which is almost as rare as genius. Poetry is the only near rival of true statesmanship in this respect. The immensely wider and more various range of vision which the great poet exercises when compared with other artists, together with the necessity for the combined working of many lesser faculties and laboriously acquired accomplishments, has always made of the poet the ideal "genius" in the world's esteem. The separate insights into the significance of form, colour, and sound, upon which the arts of the sculptor, painter, and musician are founded, must be included in the vision of the poet of the first rank.

What is called "common sense" is much more nearly allied to genius, or true intellect, either than talent, which is the outcome of the discursive reason, or than learning, which is that of memory. Compared with the sunlight by which the purer intellect sees, common sense is the light of a foggy day, which is good enough to see near objects and to avoid mischief by. Science is generally considered to be the outcome solely of the observation of facts and the discursive reason; but in men like Kepler, Newton, and Faraday there is no lack of "the vision and the faculty divine." The discovery of gravitation by the fall of an apple was pure vision; and it is doubtful whether there was ever a Smith's Prizeman who had not a touch of a higher faculty than that which gropes step by step from premises to conclusions.

A ghastly semblance of genius is often retained by such persons as once had it, but have ruined it by denying it in action and by endeavouring to prostitute it to selfish or vicious interests. Their judicial blind-



ness is the reverse of that which was inflicted upon Tiresias for daring to gaze upon unveiled wisdom. He could no longer see the world ; they can no longer see the heavens. But their original genius takes the perverted form of an intuitive craft in pursuing their ends which is no less amazing, and which, in statesmen especially, is commonly mistaken by the people for the holy faculty which has been quenched.

To be a man of talent a man must be able to think ; to be a man of genius he must be able not to think, and especially to abstain from the crazy wool-gathering which is ordinarily regarded as thought. "The harvest of a quiet eye," and the learning of the ear which listens in a silence even of thought, are the wealth of the pure intellect. And the fainter and the more remote the whispers which are heard in such silence, the more precious and potential are they likely to be. It is no condemnation of the thought of Hegel that he is reported to have replied to some question as to the meaning of a passage in his writings, that "he knew what it meant when he wrote it." This thought, too subtle or too simple for expression and memory, might, if held down and compelled to manifest itself more explicitly, have moved mankind.

Genius is a great disturber. It is always a new thing, and demands of old things that they shall make a place for it, which cannot be done without more or less inconvenient rearrangements ; and as it seems to threaten even worse trouble than it is finally found to give, it is generally hated and resisted on its first appearance. Moreover, to the eye which is not congenial, the fresh manifestation of genius in almost any

kind has something in it alarming and revolting; and it is welcomed with an "Ugh, ugh! the horrid thing! It's alive!" A man of genius who is also a man of sense will never complain of such a reception from his fellows. Their opposition is even respectable from their point of view and with their faculties of beholding.

## II

Genius, like sanctity, is commonly more or less foolish in the eyes of the world. Its riches are "the riches of secret places"; and they so much exceed, in its esteem, those that are considered riches by the common sense of men, that its neglect of the ordinary goods of life often amounts to real imprudence—imprudence even from its own point of view, whereby it is bound to avoid hindrances to its free life and exercise. The follies, however, of a Blake or a Hartley Coleridge are venial when compared with those of the thoughtful and prudent fool—the fool in respect of great things, as the other is in respect of small. Who can measure the harm that may be done to the world by a thoughtful and earnest fool—one who starts from data which he is too dull to verify, and who multiplies his mistakes in proportion to the perspicuity and extent of his deductions? The man of "talent" who is merely such, is not a very common phenomenon—for "talent" is in great part the product of culture, which "genius," or the power of seeing, is not. Most persons of talent still possess a share of that obscure kind of genius called common sense, which keeps them from taking up with false principles

and following them into wild conclusions. We need, however, only recall some famous figures in the present and past generation in order to be assured that immense talent is consistent with an almost complete deficiency of real insight. When the discursive understanding is in great force and has at its command abundant stores of external information, we behold a power that may work the ruin of empires amid applauding peoples, though it can never build them up. The natural and exact sciences are the proper fields for the exertions of such a faculty.

Stupid persons fancy they derogate from the supremacy of the pure intellect or genius by observing that it is always associated with a vivid imagination, which they regard as a faculty for seeing things as they are not. Shelley made a mistake in a totally different direction when he declared that the imagination is the power by which spiritual things are discerned: whereas the truth is that intellect is the power by which such things are discerned, and imagination is that by which they are expressed. Sensible things alone can be expressed fully and directly by sensible terms. Symbols and parables, and metaphors—which are parables on a small scale—are the only means of adequately conveying, or rather hinting, supersensual knowledge. “He spake not without a parable.” Hebrew, Greek, Indian, and Egyptian religions all spoke in parables: and poets deal in images and parables simply because there is no other vehicle for what they have to say. “The things which are unseen may be known by the things which are seen,” that is, by way of symbol and parable. Imagination,

*poetic  
imagination*

though it is not, as Shelley says it is, the power of spiritual insight, is its invariable concomitant; and even that dull kinsman of genius, common sense, would feel sadly hampered in its endeavours to convey its perceptions to the minds of others, were it wholly without the faculty of speaking in parables.

It has often been noted that men of genius have bad memories, and that persons having extraordinary memories, like Cardinal Mezzofanti, have little else. The truth is that there are two quite distinct kinds of memory: the memory for external facts and words, apart from their significance; and the memory for spiritual facts and principles. The man of genius, who may have no special reason for cultivating the lower kind of memory, may even find it rather a hindrance than a help. His prayer is, "Let not my heart forget the things mine eyes have seen." So long as his heart retains the significance of the facts he has seen and the words he has heard, he is willing to let the words and the facts go, as a man casts away the shells after he has eaten the oysters. The "well-informed" person commonly differs from the man of genius in this: that he carries about with him all the shells of all the oysters he has ever eaten, and that his soul has grown thin under the burthen.

A commonplace about men of genius is, that they usually have religious dispositions. It would be strange were it otherwise, seeing that genius is nothing but the power of discerning the things of the spirit. The first principle of the most recent form of "psychology" is, indeed, that there is no soul; but that man must have little genius who would not say "Amen"

to St. Bernard's epigram, "He must have little spirit who thinks that a spirit is nothing."

After what has just been said, it seems paradoxical to be obliged to admit that the sins to which men of genius are usually most subject are those of sense. From pride, and its offspring envy, hatred, and malice, which play so terrible a part in the affairs of most men, they are comparatively exempt. That they should often be more subject than others to be misled by the ease and pleasure of the senses, may be because the senses of men of genius are more subtly permeated by the spirit, of which they are the ultimate life, than are those of the world at large, and are thereby rendered more acute and less sordidly wicked. This may be said, I hope, without in any way condoning error.

Men of genius, who are therewithal men of cultivated talents and great stores of appropriate information, are the only safe legislators and governors of empires; not only because theirs alone is the sufficiency of sound and far-seeing wisdom, but because they are far less likely than other men to be misled by personal motives and weak fears. But such men, unhappily, are the last to come to the front in states of ultra-popular government; and in such states they have accordingly to suffer that last misery (as by one of the greatest philosophers it has been called), the misery of being governed by worse men than themselves.

## XIV

### POSSIBILITIES AND PERFORMANCES

IF we take stock of the world's actual achievements —intellectual, moral, and artistic — in the six thousand years during which we know anything about it, it is impossible not to be struck with the extreme smallness of the sum of the acquisitions and attainments of the human race as compared with its desires and apparent possibilities. If those desires and possibilities had in no instances been fulfilled, the entire absence of attainment would have been less startling than is its actual paucity. It would not have been nearly so wonderful if none had reached the high tablelands of excellence in any department of human activity as it is that those heights have been reached by some and by so few. And the marvel of this paucity becomes yet further increased when it is considered that it is not only all that mankind has done, but in all likelihood nearly as much as it could have done had it tried ever so hard. For it is a peculiarity of the very highest work in every kind, that it is not the result of painful labour, but that it is easier to do it than not to do it, when it can be done at all. So that humanity must not be allowed to cover its enormous shortcomings with an "I could an I would."



How many philosophers has philosophy produced? If Aristotle be the type, where is the other specimen of the species? How many statesmen have there been whose faculties and characters, nearly inspected, do not provoke the exclamation, "With how little wisdom the world is governed!" In how many Christians has Christianity flowered as in the souls of St. John and St. Francis? Greek architecture and Greek sculpture mean little more than the Parthenon and its friezes. What survives of Greek poetry will scarcely fill one bookshelf, and English poetry, which forms the greater part of the rest of the poetry of the human race, would rest easily on three. The building of the Middle Ages is nothing but the repetition of one inspiration, which would remain transmitted to us almost in its entirety were the Cathedral of Freiburg the only specimen left to us. A single gallery of the Vatican would provide wall-room sufficient for all the paintings of the world that are able to fill with satisfying peace the eye which has been educated by Botticelli, Luini, and Raphael. An ordinary life affords abundant leisure to take in all that two hundred generations of mankind have so done as to fill the craving for what all men feel to be alone satisfyingly human. That is to say, one man in twenty millions or so has been able, during some—often very small—proportion of his life, to be and to do that which all men, when they behold such being and doing, feel to be their natural though utterly unattainable prerogative. Thousands and thousands climb, with praiseworthy struggles and integrity of purpose and with shouts of "Excelsior!", the minor



peaks of life ; while two or three in a generation are seen walking with easy breath about those great and tranquil table-lands for which all of us, on beholding them, feel that we were born. It is not that, in a world of inequalities, some two or three in a generation must naturally stand higher than all the rest, as only one among many competitors can be Senior Wrangler. That fuller excellence is a region, and not a pinnacle ; and those who reach it are all upon a great and facile equality, their altitude being simply that of right and unhindered human faculty.

Every individual of the human race is, in this regard, an image of the race itself. Only for a few hours, perhaps, of the million which is about the sum of the longest lifetime, has each one easily and unaccountably found himself to be living indeed. Some accident, some passing occasion which has called upon him to be more than himself, some glimpse of grace in nature or in woman, some lucky disaster even, or some mere wayward tide of existence, has caused the black walls of his prison-house to vanish ; and he has breathed in a realm of vision, generosity, and gracious peace, "too transient for delight and too divine." These prophetic moments—one in a million—pass ; but, unless he has despised and denied them, they leave him capable, more or less, of understanding prophecy ; and he knows that in him also there is a potentiality, realisable perhaps under other than present conditions, of becoming one in that great society in which such states of life appear to be not momentary crises but habits. The wider and the deeper his personal experience of beauty and felicity,

the more readily will a man confess that life contains scarcely anything for fruition but abundance for hope; and the better he is acquainted with that which has been best done and said in all ages, the less he will be inclined to believe that the world is making any advances towards the realisation of the promise which every age repeats. An enigma for which science has no key is the certain fact, that if the world be not a prophecy of good things which it shows no likelihood of providing, then it is all nothing but a purposeless and badly conceived tragedy, upon which the sooner the black curtain drops the better. For if the world be not such a prophecy, then the best of men are of all men the most miserable; to these is given beyond others the "transitory gleam" which shows the dulness of their ordinary life for the lingering death it really is; but, knowing little or nothing of life as it is known to such, the stupid and "the wicked have no bonds in their death," and can feel only the comparatively tolerable evils of external and accidental adversity.

There never was a time in which the "higher life," "high art," etc., were less known than in the present, when every goose is gabbling about them. The proof is in the way these names are constantly associated with that of "progress"; whereas progress, as respects the realities, is, if it exists at all, most certainly a progress backwards. The rejoicings of Lord Macaulay and his like over the recent advances of mankind are exactly those of a prosperous shopman over the increase of his business; and the hallelujahs of science are mainly over the elaboration of mighty means for petty ends and of theories which explain

away God and exhibit all that past ages have called wisdom as folly. It is too absurd! Yet we must not allow the present eclipse of the electric lights of true learning by the flaring tar-barrels of jubilant ignorance to discourage us in the belief that there is, on the whole, no cessation of the work for which the world goes on. The conscience of mankind, though occasionally confused and obscured, will always cry "Amen" to the great word of St. Augustine, "What ought to be must be"; and the rare achievements of genius and sanctity and the few and far-between glimpses of the life that is indeed life, which are accorded to all, will continue to be accepted as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

## XV

### IMAGINATION

THERE are things which can never be more than approximately defined, and which, even when so defined, are to be rightly understood only in proportion to the degrees in which they are possessed by those who would attempt to comprehend them. Such are, for example, "imagination" and ~~"genius"~~ <sup>"intellect"</sup>; which, being faculties that are possessed in a very low degree by nearly all and in a very high degree by extremely few, are matters of the most general interest and the most variable apprehension. That such faculties should, however, as far as possible, be understood is of great practical importance to all persons; inasmuch as it greatly concerns all to know something of the signs, sanctions, and claims of those powers by which they are inevitably more or less ruled externally and internally.

It is nothing against a definition of an entity which cannot be fully defined, to say that such definition is "new." It was objected against an interpretation by St. Augustine of some Old Testament history or parable, that other authorities had given other interpretations. "The more interpretations the better," was the saint's reply. In such cases various definitions

and interpretations are merely apprehensions of various sides of a matter not wholly to be embraced or comprehended by any single definition or interpretation. In recent times genius and imagination have come to be widely regarded as one and the same thing. They are not so, however, though they are perhaps indissolubly connected. The most peculiar and characteristic mark of genius is insight into subjects which are dark to ordinary vision and for which ordinary language has no adequate expression. Imagination is rather the language of genius: the power which traverses at a single glance the whole external universe, and seizes on the likenesses and images, and their combinations, which are best able to embody ideas and feelings otherwise inexpressible; so that the "things which are unseen are known by the things which are seen." Imagination, in its higher developments, is so quick and subtle a power that the most delicate analysis can scarcely follow its shortest flights. Coleridge said that it would take a whole volume to analyse the effect of a certain passage of only a few syllables in length. In dealing with such a work as *The Tempest* criticism is absolutely helpless, and its noblest function is to declare its own helplessness by directing attention to beauty beyond beauty which defies analysis. *The Tempest*, like all very great works of art, is the shortest and simplest, and indeed the only possible expression of its "idea." The idea is the product of genius proper; the expression is the work of imagination. There are cases, however, in which it is hard to distinguish at all between these inseparable qualities. The initiation of a scientific theory seems

Imagination is not in insight  
genius is insight  
Imagination is not in insight  
genius is insight

Imagination is not in insight  
genius is insight  
Imagination is not in insight  
genius is insight

often to have been due to the action of the imagination working independently of any peculiar direct insight; the analogy-discovering faculty—that is, the imagination—finding a law for a whole sphere of unexplained phenomena in the likeness of such phenomena to others of a different sphere of which the law is known. Hence the real discoverers of such theories are scarcely ever those who have obtained the credit of them; for nothing is usually 'more abhorrent to men of extraordinary imagination than "fact-grinding." Such men, after having flung out their discoveries to the contempt or neglect of their contemporaries, leave the future proof of them to mental mechanics: religiously avoiding such work themselves, lest, as Goethe said of himself, they should find themselves imprisoned in "the charnel-house of science." Genius and imagination of a very high kind are not at all uncommon in children under twelve years of age, especially when their education has been "neglected." The writer can guarantee the following facts from personal witness: A clever child of seven, who could not read, and had certainly never heard of the Newtonian theory of gravitation, said to his mother suddenly, "What makes this ball drop when I leave hold of it?—Oh, I know: the ground pulls it." Another child, a year or two older, lay stretched on a gravel path, staring intently on the pebbles. "They are alive," he cried, in the writer's hearing; "they are always wanting to burst, but something draws them in." This infantine rediscovery of the doctrine of the coinherence of attraction and repulsion in matter seems to have been an effort of direct insight. The repetition of the Newtonian apple reve-



Imagination does not know  
Truth but only likeness  
& differences

## IMAGINATION

Imagination seems rather to have been the work of the imagination, tracking likeness in difference; but to discern such likeness is, again, an effort of direct insight, and justifies Aristotle's saying that this power of finding similitude in things diverse is a proof of the highest human faculty. The poet's eye glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; and his faculty of discerning likeness in difference enables him to express the unknown in the terms of the known, so as to confer upon the former a sensible credibility, and to give the latter a truly sacramental dignity. The soul contains world upon world of the most real of realities of which it has no consciousness until it is awakened to their existence by some parable or metaphor, some strain of rhythm or music, some combination of form or colour, some scene of beauty or sublimity, which suddenly expresses the inexpressible by a lower likeness. The vulgar cynic, blessing when he only means to bray, declares that love between the sexes is "all imagination." What can be truer? What baser thing is there than such love, when it is not of imagination all compact? or what more nearly divine, when it is? Why? Because the imagination deals with the spiritual realities to which the material realities correspond, and of which they are only, as it were, the ultimate and sensible expressions. And here it may be noted, by the way, that Nature supplies the ultimate analogue of every divine mystery with some vulgar use or circumstance, in order, as it would seem, to enable the stupid and the gross to deny the divine without actual blasphemy.

Profligacy and "fact-grinding" destroy the imagin-



ation by habitually dwelling in ultimate expressions while denying or forgetting the primary realities of which they are properly only the vessels. Purity ends by finding a goddess where impurity concludes by confessing carrion. Which of these is the reality, let each man judge according to his taste. "Fact-grinding"—which Darwin confessed and lamented had destroyed his imagination and caused him to "nauseate Shakespeare"—commonly ends in destroying the religious faculty, as profligacy destroys the faculty of love; for neither love nor religion can survive without imagination, which Shelley, in one of his prefaces, identifying genius with imagination, declares to be the power of discerning spiritual facts. Those who have no imagination regard it as all one with "fancy," which is only a playful mockery of imagination, bringing together things in which there is nothing but an accidental similarity in externals.

and interpretations are merely apprehensions of various sides of a matter not wholly to be embraced or comprehended by any single definition or interpretation. In recent times genius and imagination have come to be widely regarded as one and the same thing. They are not so, however, though they are perhaps indissolubly connected. The most peculiar and characteristic mark of genius is insight into subjects which are dark to ordinary vision and for which ordinary language has no adequate expression. Imagination is rather the language of genius: the power which traverses at a single glance the whole external universe, and seizes on the likenesses and images, and their combinations, which are best able to embody ideas and feelings otherwise inexpressible; so that the "things which are unseen are known by the things which are seen." Imagination, in its higher developments, is so quick and subtle a power that the most delicate analysis can scarcely follow its shortest flights. Coleridge said that it would take a whole volume to analyse the effect of a certain passage of only a few syllables in length. In dealing with such a work as *The Tempest* criticism is absolutely helpless, and its noblest function is to declare its own helplessness by directing attention to beauty beyond beauty which defies analysis. *The Tempest*, like all very great works of art, is the shortest and simplest, and indeed the only possible expression of its "idea." The idea is the product of genius proper; the expression is the work of imagination. There are cases, however, in which it is hard to distinguish at all between these inseparable qualities. The initiation of a scientific theory seems

Imagination is the  
power of intuition.  
It is the power of insight.  
It is the power of vision.

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## XVI

### THE LIMITATIONS OF GENIUS

IN art, as in higher matters, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"; and the initial cause of failure in many who seem to have faculties which should ensure success, is not so much the difficulty of the road which leads to it as want of humility in confessing its narrowness. Each man is by birth a unique individuality, which the circumstances of his life will increase and develop continually, if he be content to do his duty in the station, intellectual and otherwise, to which it has pleased God to call him, without falling below its obligations or assuming others which have not been laid upon him. The low but still priceless degree of genius which consists in individuality in manners, and which renders the possessor of it powerfully though imperceptibly edifying in all companies, is open to all, though few are sufficiently simple and honest and unambitious to attain to it by turning neither to the right hand nor the left in pursuit of their particular good of life.

"Originality," whether in manners, action, or art, ~~consists simply in a man's being upon his own line;~~ in his advancing with a single mind towards his unique



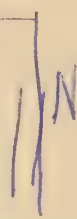
apprehension of good ; and in his doing so in harmony with the universal laws which secure to all men the liberty of doing as he is doing, without hindrance from his or any other's individuality. Unless "originality" thus works in submission to and harmony with general law, it loses its nature. In morals it becomes sin or insanity, in manners and in art oddity and eccentricity, which are in reality the extreme opposites and travesties of originality. As in religion it is said that "no man can know whether he is worthy of love," so in art and ordinary life no man can know whether he is original. If through habitual fidelity to his idea of good he has attained to originality, he will be the last person in the world to know it. If he thinks he is original, he is probably not so ; and if he is commonly praised for originality, he may hardly hope to attain to any such distinction. Originality never expresses itself in harsh and obtrusive singularities. A society of persons of true originality in manners would be like an oak-tree, the leaves of which all look alike until they are carefully compared, when it is found that they are all different. In art, the sphere of extraordinary originalities, there is the same absence of strongly pronounced distinctions, and therefore the same withdrawal from the recognition of the vulgar, who look for originality in antics, oddities, crudities, and incessant violations of the universal laws which true originality religiously observes ; its very function consisting, as it does, in upholding those laws and illustrating them and making them unprecedentedly attractive by its own peculiar emphases and modulations.



The individuality or "genius" of a man, which results from fidelity in life and art to his "ruling love," is almost necessarily narrow. Shakespeare is the only artist that ever lived whose genius has even approached to universality. His range is so great that ordinary readers, if, like Mr. Frederic Harrison, they had the courage to speak their impressions, would with him condemn the greater part of the poet's work as "rubbish"—that is, as having no counterpart in the "positivism" of their actual or imaginative experience. Every play of Shakespeare is a new vision—not only a new aspect of his vision, as is the case with the different works of nearly all other artists, even the greatest.

Narrowness, indeed, so far from being opposed to greatness in art, is often its condition. Dante and Wordsworth are proofs that greatness of genius consists in seeing clearly rather than much; and well it would have been both for poets and for readers had the former always or even generally understood the economy of moving always on their own lines. Nothing has so much injured modern art as the artist's ambition to show off his "breadth"; and many an immortal lyric or idyll has been lost because the lyric or idyllic poet has chosen to forsake his line for the production of exceedingly mortal epics or tragedies. The modern custom of exhibiting all the works of a single painter at a time affords proof which every one will understand of what has been said. Who, with an eye for each painter's true quality, can have gone over the collections in recent years of the pictures of Reynolds, Rossetti, Blake, Holman Hunt,

and others, without a feeling of surprise, and some perhaps irrational disappointment, at the discovery for the first time of the artist's limitations? Each had painted the same vision over and over again! There was no harm in that. The mistake was in bringing together the replicas which should have adorned "palace chambers far apart." But poets, whose "works" are always collectively exhibited, should beware how they betray the inevitable fact of the narrowness of genius. Not only should they never leave their own line for another which is not their own, but they should be equally careful not to go over it again when they have once got to the end of it.



## XVII

### A "PESSIMIST" OUTLOOK

DESPOTISM, which is not government, but anarchy speaking with one voice, whether it be the mandate of an irresponsible emperor or that of a multitude, is the "natural" death of all nationalities. They may die by other means, but this is the end they come to if left to themselves. When this end is reached, the corrupt body may, for a time, preserve a semblance of its old identity; but it is no longer a nation: it is merely a localisation of "man's shameful swarm," in which the individual has no help from the infinitely greater and nobler vitality of which he was a living member to erect himself above himself, and to breathe the generous breath, and feel himself in all his acts a partaker of the deceased giant's superhuman vigour. The incidence of the misery is not only upon those comparatively few who may be conscious of its cause. The malaria of the universal marsh stupefies the brain and deadens the heart of the very ploughman who turns its sod, and he is hourly the worse for want of the healthy breeze and invigorating prospect of the ancient hills, which he himself was, perhaps, among the most eager to level. Though he knew it

not, he was every day sensibly the better for being the member of a great nation.

" He felt the giant's heat,  
Albeit he simply called it his,  
Flush in his common labour with delight,  
And not a village maiden's kiss  
But was for this  
More sweet,  
And not a sorrow but did lightlier sigh,  
And for its private self less greet,  
The while that other so majestic self stood by."

If he does not feel the loss of his corporate life, but is content to struggle, stink, and sting with the rest of the swarm into which the national body has been resolved by corruption, so much the worse for him. His insensibility is the perfection of his misery. To others, not so lost, there may be hope, though not in this stage of being. None who has ever lived through the final change, or who, being in the foul morass of resulting "equality," has been able to discern what national life means, can find in private fortune—wife, children, friends, money—any compensation for the great life of which his veins are empty. He knows that there is no proximate hope, no possibility of improvement in such a state of things. He knows that it is absurd to expect anything from "education" of the mass. True education cannot exist under either kind of despotism. National life is the beginning and end of individual culture, as far as this world is concerned. The acquisition of knowledge by an unorganised or enslaved multitude, which must always be, in the main, self-seeking and unjust, is merely the

acquisition of subtler and baser means for the advancement of individual covetousness and the indulgence of individual vices. Such education is but "a jewel in a swine's snout." Fools may fill the air with sentimental or hypocritical "aspirations" for the good of the community; but no community exists where no excellence has the power of asserting itself politically and more or less in spite of the ignorance and malice of those whom it would serve. Such "aspirations" are but the iridescent colours on the stagnant pool; putrid splendours which have no existence in the chronic and salutary storm of national life.

Nor is there any hope from without. A comparatively savage people has often been impregnated with the germ of national being by the military invasion of a civilisation still in the vigour of growth; but there is no instance of a civilisation which has thus lapsed into anarchy having been regenerated by any such means, though its stagnated life may have been perpetuated, as in the case of China, by an external tyranny more powerful than any of the shifting forms of despotism which it develops, if left to itself, from within. Nor is there any light, even in the far future, unless for him who has a fulness of that cosmopolitan benevolence which is so often the boast of the simpleton or the political hypocrite, but, happily, so seldom the possession of the natural man. He knows that no soil has ever yet been found to bear two crops of national life, though the corruption of one has often been found, after many generations of consummated decay, to be very useful dung for the nourishment of other and far removed fields. But this

consideration does not bring him within measurable distance of practical political consolation.

The frantic ambition of one bad man, and the cowardice of half a dozen others, who would have been honest had it not appeared too personally inconvenient, and the apathy of that large portion of the community which has been sane in judgment but insane in sloth, have brought the final evil upon us fifty or a hundred years sooner than it need have come. But come it must have done sooner or later, since the powers of evil have invariably, in worldly matters, proved too strong in the long run for those of good; and such as cannot bear this truth, but require that abiding temporal good should come of their good works, had better go into monasteries. Considering what men are, the wonder is, not that all great nationalities should have come to a shameful end, but that their ordinary duration of life should have been a thousand years. How any of them should have lasted a hundred must seem a miracle to those who fail to take into account the agency of the two guardian angels of national life, religion and war—religion which keeps alive the humility and generosity of reasonable submission to law and the spirit of self-sacrifice for corporate life; and war, which silences for a time the envy and hatred of the evil and ignorant for moral and circumstantial superiorities, and compels them to trust their established leaders on pain of prompt annihilation.

Even our great "liberal" prophet, Mr. Herbert Spencer, is compelled, in spite of himself, to prophesy with terror of what he rightly calls "the coming

slavery," the despotism, not of a single irresponsible tyrant, who must content himself with doing good or evil in so general a way that the sense of private compulsion or injury would weigh little on each individual, but the paltry and prying despotism of the vestry—the more "virtuous" the more paltry and prying—persecuting each individual by the intrusion of its myriad-handed, shifting, ignorant, and irresistible tyranny into the regulation of our labour, our household, and our very victuals, and, however "pure" in its abstract intention, necessarily corrupt in its application by its agents, since men, as a rule, are corrupt. Indications are not wanting of the sort of "government" we are committed to, unless the coming war shall leave us in the grip of a less irksome tyranny. It will be a despotism which will have to be mitigated by continual "tips," as the other kind has had to be by occasional assassination. Neither the voter nor the inspector yet know their power and opportunities; but they soon will. We shall have to "square" the district surveyor once or twice a year, lest imaginary drains become a greater terror than real typhoid; we shall have to smoke our pipes secretly and with a sense of sin, lest the moral supervisor of the parish should decline our offer of half-a-crown for holding his nose during his weekly examination of our bedrooms and closets; the good Churchman will have to receive Communion under the "species" of ginger ale—as some advanced congregations have already proposed—unless the parson can elude the churchwarden with white port, or otherwise persuade him; and, every now and then, all this will be changed, and we shall



have to tip our policemen and inspectors for looking over our infractions of popular moralities of a newer pattern. Our condition will very much resemble Swedenborg's hell, in which everybody is incessantly engaged in the endeavour to make everybody else virtuous; and the only compensating comforts to the sane will be that, though wine and tobacco, those natural stimulants to good impulses and fruitful meditations, may be denied him, he may find abundant time and opportunity, in the cessation of all external interests of a moral and intellectual nature, for improving his own character, which, perhaps, is, after all, the only way in which a man can be sure of improving the world's; and, furthermore, he will no longer be discomposed by the prospect of "national disaster," since there can be no national disaster where there is no nation, however freely the gutters may run with blood. Private disaster, in such an infernal millennium, will be a trifle.

Under such conditions, secret societies of discontented and hopeless minorities will abound. Dynamite will often shake the nerves of smug content, and enrage the People beyond bounds at such revolt against its infallible decrees. But none of these societies will be so hateful as the secret and inevitable aristocracy of the remnant that refuses to give interior assent to the divinity of the Brummagem Baal. Its members will acquire means of association and methods of forbidding intrusion which will infuriate the rest, who, in their turn, will invent tests for the discovery, in order to the punishment, of these "enemies of mankind," as the Dutch traders in Japan

did, in inviting all persons of doubtful character to trample on the crucifix.

I have called these glances at the near future "pessimist," because that is the word now generally applied to all such forecasts as are made by those who do not ignore or pervert patent facts. 'Optimists,' as far as I can gather, are those who hope all things from "local option."

## XVIII

### THOUGHTS ON KNOWLEDGE, OPINION, AND INEQUALITY

SOME learned men have maintained that we can know nothing. The truth is better stated by St. Paul: "If a man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing as he ought," that is nothing other than imperfectly. It is the more difficult to deal systematically with this matter, because we want, in our tongue, words of such relative meaning as *scire*, *cognoscere*, *intelligere*, etc. I propose only to run together a few such observations as simple good sense can make, and accept, and find use for.

A great and increasing proportion of persons would, if you asked them, maintain that all convictions are merely opinions. But it is not so. A fool may opine absolutely that a wise man is a fool, but the wise man knows that the fool is one. The same or opposite conclusions, political or otherwise, may be arrived at by two persons from a view of the same facts, and each may be equally confident; but the conclusions of one may be knowledge, and those of the other opinion. The reality of the difference is indicated by the difference of the feelings which commonly subsist between those who opine and those who know. Those who opine hate

those who know, and who speak as those who know. They think it an assumption of superiority, whereas it is only its reality, and cannot but appear more or less in its manner of expression. Those who know are contemptuous or indifferent only towards such as impudently or ignorantly opine. The consequence is that the knowledge which is wisdom is nowhere as an acknowledged force and factor in worldly affairs, and is able to assert itself only *sub rosa*, or by accident, or by the more or less underhand management of folly and ignorance.

What most people call "deep and earnest convictions" on political and social topics are generally muddle-headed medleys of knowledge of fact and opinion. They know that such and such a thing is an evil, and they opine that they see a way to amend it; and if wiser people point out to them that the evil would not be so amended, or that greater evils would accrue from the attempt, they only feel that their "convictions" are affronted and opposed by cold-blooded calculations. This kind of opinion is often as confident as actual knowledge. When Carlyle said that it was impossible to believe a lie, he can only have meant that it was impossible to believe it with that highest kind of certitude which consists in intellectual perception. Probably no one could believe a lie with that degree of faith which would enable him to suffer deliberate martyrdom for it. Protestant and Catholic martyrs have usually been sufferers for one and the same faith, or, at least, parts of the same faith, in which parts they have considered the whole to be involved. Very few, if any, have ever carried the courage of mere "opinions" to the stake.

There can be no absolute certitude about the impressions of the senses or the inferences drawn from them. There can be about moral and spiritual things. The knave may sincerely opine that it is best for his interests to lie and cheat ; but the honest man knows that he is a being whose interests are above all external contingencies, and that under certain circumstances it would be madness to behave otherwise than in a way which would be directly opposed to every argument and persuasion of the senses. It is only the mind of the most highly "scientific" constitution that will have its confidence in knowledge of this kind tried by considerations of its moral and intellectual obligations to Hottentots and Australian aborigines. "We can live in houses without being architects"; and we can know, without knowing or caring to know how we came by our knowledge. The house of the gods has lasted intact since Abraham and Hesiod, and shows no sign yet of tumbling about our ears.

The faculty of knowing, as differing from that of opining, seems, as might be expected from what has been said, to have as much to do with the character of the will as with that of the mind. To be honest, Shakespeare tells us, is to be one in ten thousand ; and to discern intellectually, or to know, is a part, and a very great part, of honesty. A man may have learned a dozen languages, and have the whole circle of the sciences at his fingers' ends, and may know nothing worthy of being called knowledge ; indeed, there is nothing which seems to be a greater hindrance to the acquisition of living knowledge than an engrossing devotion to the acquisition of words, facts, logical

methods, and natural laws. It requires little learning to make a wise or truly knowing man, but much learning may not impossibly spoil one.

Mr. Matthew Arnold has said that a thorough classical education has often the same effects on a man's character as a grave experience. The reason is that it is a grave experience, a long series of small exercises of honesty, patience, and self-sacrifice, the sum of which is equal to a great and soul-sobering calamity. The author of the *Imitation* notes a kindred fact when he says, "No man can know anything till he is tried." Not only is the discipline of such an education, which, in its early stage at least, has much in it that is repugnant and compulsory, fitted to qualify the character for the reception of true knowledge, but it conveys also, in an eminent degree, the matter of true knowledge. Without any disrespect to Professor Huxley, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and Professor Max Müller, we may affirm that the man who knew Plato, Homer, and Æschylus rightly, and knew little else, would know far more than he who knew all that these great scientists could teach, and knew nothing else.

The man who knows, often finds himself at great disadvantage in the presence of fact-gatherers and persons who opine. His attitude is necessarily affirmative, and often, to the great scandal and contempt of his adversaries, simply affirmative. It does not enter into his calculations to have to defend actively a position which he sees to be impregnable; and when he leaves his proper occupation of "climbing trees in the Hesperides" to wield his club against those who

know of no such trees, he is like a Hercules fighting mosquitoes. They cannot even see his club, and the conflict generally ends, as did that between the Lady and Comus, with an angry and wholly unconvincing assertion of incompetence.

Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?  
 Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend  
 The sublime notion and high mystery  
 That must be utter'd to unfold the sage  
 And serious doctrine of virginity.  
 And thou art worthy that thou should'st not know  
 More happiness than is thy present lot.  
 Enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric,  
 That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence ;  
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.

Wordsworth, in a still greater passion, calls his scientific adversary "a fingering slave." Of course this sort of thing tends to make the relations of the parties unpleasant ; and in the eyes of the world the man of immense "information" and convinced ignorance goes off with the laurels.

Metaphysics for the most part are justly open to the objection that they attempt to explain things which Aristotle declares to be too simple to be intelligible—things which we cannot see with definiteness, not because they are beyond the focus of the mind's eye, but because they are too much within it. The metaphysician Hegel says that the sense of honour arises from our consciousness of infinite personal value. This may not be wholly satisfactory, but it is helpful ; it is a part of the truth. But what do physicists make of such things as honour and chastity ? They certainly endeavour to explain such ideas and feelings as they



do everything else, but their explanations necessarily discredit these and all other things which profess to have "infinite value," and which wise men know to have infinite value.

The knowledge which can be made common to all, is a foundation upon which a certain increasing school, finding popular "opinion" too sandy, is endeavouring to build up a new state of things, religious, moral, political, and social. This kind of "positivism," which claims for its sanction the common, that is to say, the lowest experience of mankind, is and always has been the religion of the vulgar, to whatever class they belong. The growth of an unconscious and undogmatic positivism among the people at large is perhaps the most notable fact of the time. It shows itself not only in an increasing impatience of the notion that there is any reality which cannot be seen and felt, but in an intolerance even of any experience which is not, or cannot immediately be made, the experience of all. As boards and committees proverbially have to work on the level of the least wise of their members, so the ideal perfection of this positivism would be government by the insight of the greatest dunderhead, since his experiences and perceptions alone would be sufficiently communicable to have the character of universality. Under such ideal conditions, every reality that makes life human would be completely eliminated. A man who should be detected in secretly entertaining principles of abstract honour, or trying to form his life upon the pattern of a beauty unknown to the arch-dunderhead, would fare as it fared in Athens with the man who dared to crown his

house with a pediment ; and vestries, consisting of the prophets of commonplace and popular experience, would vote everything in painting and poetry to be "bosh" which should be more esoteric in character than Frith's "Railway Station" or Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*.

Science has already come very generally to mean, not that which may be known, but only such knowledge as every animal with faculties a little above those of an ant or a beaver can be induced to admit. Incommunicable knowledge, or knowledge which can be communicated at present only to a portion—perhaps a small portion—of mankind, is already affirmed to be no knowledge at all. A man who knows and acts up to his knowledge that it is better to suffer or inflict any extremity of temporal evil, than to lie or cheat, though he may not be able to give any universally intelligible account of his knowledge, is already beginning to be looked upon as a prig or a fanatic ; and chastity is already widely declared to be one of the "dead virtues," and marriage only legalised fornication, because "the sublime notion and high mystery that must be uttered to unfold the sage and serious doctrine" of purity must be taken, if taken at all by the many, upon trust.

The pure and simple ideal of life founded upon facts of universal experience is, however, too base ever to be perfectly attained in this world. There will always be a lingering suspicion with many that some have powers of discernment and an experience which are not granted to all ; there will always be hidden heretics who will believe that there are realities which

cannot be seen or touched by the natural eye or hand, or even by the rational perception of the many; and the present downward tendency may perhaps be checked, or at least delayed, by recalling to the minds of men that, as yet, we are all living more or less by faith in the better knowledge of the few, and by reminding them of that abyss towards which a new step is taken whenever any item of that knowledge is denied in order to widen the foundations of the throne of popular experience.

The religion of universal experience must of course begin, as the dogmatic positivist insists, in the denial of God, or, what is exactly equivalent, in the assertion that, if God exists, He is altogether unknowable and removed from the practical interests of life. Now, let it be remembered that for a man to deny that God can be known is quite a different thing from his not being able to affirm, from positive knowledge, the reverse. A very small minority of mankind, but a minority which includes almost all who have attained the highest peaks of heroic virtue and many who have been no less eminent for power of intellect and practical wisdom, have declared that, to them at least, God is knowable, communicable with, and personally discernible with a certainty which exceeds all other certainties; and they have further affirmed that this knowledge comes and can only come from a man's putting himself *en rapport* with the Divinity by an, in the beginning, more or less experimental faith, and by a conformity to the dictates of the highest conscience, so perfect as to involve, for a considerable period at least, laborious and painful self-denial. Now it would

be placing oneself upon a level with such assertors of the highest knowledge to say that one knows that these declarations are true, however strong the presumption of their truth may appear; but it is simply vulgar and brutal impudence for any one to assert positively that they are untruths or illusions, merely because his own experience or that of his pot-companions contains nothing which gives the least clue to their meaning. The *reductio ad absurdum* becomes complete when the same argument is carried into regions of more extended experience. A drunken bargeman has exactly the same right to deny the reality of the asserted experiences of a Petrarch or a Wordsworth as these would have to deny those of the saint or the apostle; and to descend a few steps farther, the amateur of abominable delights and the violator of natural relationship would justly, upon the widest experimental grounds, claim exemption from a condemnation chiefly founded upon an obscure perception and an intuitive horror of which he for his part had no experience.

Popular positivism will, however, always stop short of the length to which the doctrines of its prophets would lead it, and will, from time to time, be beaten back into the paths of the positivism of the nobler few on which all virtue and religion are founded, by finding itself in contact with the tremendous paradox, that the most universally beneficial and admired fruits of civilisation are and always have been gathered from trees of which the roots are wholly out of common view. The heroes themselves of the people will always refute popular experience better than any

philosopher can. Though a Gladstone may dazzle them for a day by investing with a fatuous glamour the principles and platitudes with which the vulgar are familiar, it is to a Gordon, with inimitable courage and honour, the obvious outcome of unintelligible thoughts and experiences, that they will look with abiding reverence and an elevating instinct that such men habitually move about in worlds by them unrealised.

The immense and unalterable inequalities in the knowing faculties of man are the source and in part the justification of that social inequality which roughly and very partially reflects them. Many otherwise amiable and conservative thinkers have, however, made the mistake of conceding that such inequality is, abstractedly considered, an evil, though a hopelessly incurable one. Conservative teaching would be much more effective than it is were it more frequently occupied with proving that such inequality is no evil, but a very great good for all parties.

Dr. Johnson, who sometimes let fall, in off-hand talk, sayings of such depth, simplicity, and significance that we must go back to the philosophers of antiquity to find the like of them, once remarked that "inequality is the source of all delight." This saying, which must seem surprising to most modern ears, is absolutely true and even demonstrable.

All delight—not all pleasure, which is quite a different thing—will be found, when thoroughly examined, to consist in the rendering and receiving of love and the services of love. Hence the great and fortunately inextinguishable fountains of delight in the relation-

ships of man and woman and of parents and children. It is true that a low and inorganic form of national polity may, to some extent, suppress even these pure springs of felicity; but, so long as there are women and children in the world, it can never become quite joyless. The doctrines of liberty, fraternity, and equality are known instinctively only by very bad children; and most women, when once they have been in love, repudiate such teaching indignantly, under whatever polity they may have been born.

Between unequals sweet is equal love ;

and the fact is that there is no love, and therefore no sweetness, which is not thus conditioned; and the greater the inequality the greater the sweetness. Hence the doctrine that infinite felicity can arise only from the mutual love of beings infinitely unequal—that is, of the creator and the creature. Inequality, far from implying any dishonour on either side of the mutual compact of love, is a source of honour to both. Hooker, writing of marriage, says: "It is no small honour to a man that a creature so like himself should be subjected to him"; and we all know that the honour to woman which the chivalry of the middle ages made an abiding constituent of civilisation, was founded upon Catholic views of her subjection, and the obligation to give special honour, as of right, to the weaker vessel. Look also at the relations which usually subsist between an hereditary gentleman and his hereditary unequals and dependants, and compare them with the ordinary fraternal relations between a Radical master-tradesman and his workman. The



intercourse between the gentleman and his hind or labourer is free, cheerful, and exhilarating, because there is commonly in it the only equality worth regarding, that of goodwill; whereas the commands of the sugar-boiler or the screw-maker to their brothers are probably given with a frown and received with a scowl. Social inequality, since it arises from unalterable nature and inevitable chance, is irritating only when it is not recognised. The American plutocrat may be forced to travel for a week in the company of a hod-man, because American theories discountenance first and third class carriages; but catch him speaking to him! Whereas an English duke, if by chance thrown into the companionship of an honest countryman, would be on the best of terms with him before an hour was over, and the good understanding between the two would be made all the easier should the latter have on his distinguishing smock frock. The genuine Tory is the most accessible of persons, the genuine Radical the least so. The one takes things as they are and must be, the other views them as they are not and cannot be, and, kicking amongst imaginary evils, often pays the penalty of finding himself firmly saddled with the realities.

“One can live in a house without being an architect,” and it is not at all necessary that the common people should understand the English constitution in order to feel that their lives are the sweeter and nobler because they are members of its living organism. Not a ploughboy or a milkmaid but would feel, without in the least knowing why, that a light had passed from their lives with the disappearance of social inequalities



and the consequent loss of their dignity as integral parts of a somewhat that was greater than themselves.

The other day, walking in a country lane, I saw what appeared at a little distance to be a dying animal. On a closer view it proved to be the carcase of a sheep which had in great measure been actually transformed into a mass of the soft, white, malodorous grubs known to anglers by the name of gentles. The struggles of these creatures to get at the food which they concealed produced a strong and regular pulsation throughout the whole mass, and gave it a ghastly semblance of breathing. The ordered state of England, according to its ideal, which for many generations has been more or less realised, compared with the sort of democracy to which we are fast drifting and have well-nigh attained, is much like the animal in which myriads of individual organs, nerves, veins, tissues, and cells formed subordinated parts of one living thing, compared with this pulsating mass of grubs, each one of which had no thought but of its just share of carrion.

Democracy is only a continually shifting aristocracy of money, impudence, animal energy, and cunning, in which the best grub gets the best of the carrion ; and the level to which it tends to bring all things is not a mountain tableland, as its promoters would have their victims think, but the unwholesome platitude of the fen and the morass, of which black envy would enjoy the malaria so long as all others shared in it. Whatever may be the pretences set forth by the leading advocates of such a state of things among us, it is manifest enough that black envy is the principal

motive with many of them, who hate the beauty of the ordered life to be ruling stars of which they cannot attain, just as certain others are said to "hate the happy light from which they fell." They hate hereditary honours, chiefly because they produce hereditary honour and create a standard of truth and courage for which even the basest are the better in so far as they are shamed by it. Do the United States, some may ask, justify this condemnation? They are but a poor approach to the idea of democracy which seems now about to be realised among us : but they have already gone a long way towards extinguishing that last glory of, and now best substitute for, a generally extinct religion—a sense of honour among the people. "Why, what a dern'd fool you must be!" exclaimed a New York shopkeeper to a friend of mine, who had received a dollar too much in changing a note, and returned it. If there is a shopkeeper in England who would think such a thing, there is certainly not one who would dare to say it.

Nor, in losing sight of the sense of "infinite personal value," which is the source of honour and the growth of a long-enduring recognition of inevitable inequalities, have the Americans preserved delight. Dr. Johnson's saying finds a remarkable comment in the observation of a recent American traveller : "In the United States there is everywhere comfort, but no joy."

To conclude, it is quite possible to change the forms of social inequality, but to do away with the fact is of all things the most impossible. It is the trick or ignorance of the demagogue to charge existing inequalities with the evils and injustices in which they

began, and with which they were attended for a long time afterwards. When conquest or revolution establishes the ever-inevitable political and social inequalities in new forms, it takes many generations of misery and turmoil to introduce into them the moral equality which renders them not only tolerable, but the source of true freedom and happiness.

## XIX

### LOVE AND POETRY

EVERY man and woman who has not denied or falsified nature knows, or at any rate feels, that love, though the least "serious," is the most significant of all things. The wise do not talk much about this knowledge, for fear of exposing its delicate edge to the stolid resistance of the profligate and unbelieving, and because its light, though, and for the reason that, it exceeds all other, is deficient in definition. But they see that to this momentary transfiguration of life all that is best in them looks forward or looks back, and that it is for this the race exists, and not this for the race—the seed for the flower, not the flower for the seed. All religions have sanctified this love, and have found in it their one word for and image of their fondest and highest hopes; and the Catholic has exalted it into a "great Sacrament," holding that, with Transubstantiation—which it resembles—it is unreasonable only because it is above reason. "The love which is the best ground of marriage," writes also the Protestant and "judicious" Hooker, "is that which is least able to render a reason for itself." Indeed, the extreme unreasonableness of this passion, which gives cause for so much blaspheming to the

foolish, is one of its surest sanctions and a main cause of its inexhaustible interest and power; for who but a "scientist" values greatly or is greatly moved by anything he can understand—that which can be comprehended being necessarily less than we are ourselves?

In this matter the true poet must always be a mystic—altogether to the vulgar, and more or less to all who have not attained to his peculiar knowledge. For what is a mystery but that which one does not know? The common handicrafts used to be called mysteries; and their professors were mystics to outsiders exactly in the sense that poets or theologians, with sure, but to them uncommunicated and perhaps incommunicable, knowledge, are mystics to the many. The poet simply knows more than they do; but it flatters their malignant vanity to call him names which they mean to be opprobrious, though they are not, because he is not such a spiritual pauper as themselves. But poets are mystics, not only by virtue of knowledge which the greater part of mankind does not possess, but also because they deal with knowledge against which the accusation of dunces who know the differential calculus is etymologically true—namely, that it is *absurd*. Love is eternally absurd, for that which is the root of all things must itself be without root. Aristotle says that things are unintelligible to man in proportion as they are simple; and another says, in speaking of the mysteries of love, that the angels themselves desire in vain to look into these things.

In the hands of the poet, mystery does not hide

knowledge, but reveals it as by its proper medium. Parables and symbols are the only possible modes of expressing realities which are clear to perception though dark to the understanding. "Without a parable he spake not" who always spake of primary realities. Every spiritual reality fades into something else, and none can tell the point at which it fades. The only perfectly definite things in the universe are the conceptions of a fool, who would deny the sun he lives by if he could not see its disc. Natural sciences are definite, because they deal with laws which are not realities but conditions of realities. The greatest and perhaps the only real use of natural science is to supply similes and parables for poets and theologians.

But if the realities of love were not in themselves dark to the understanding, it would be necessary to darken them—not only lest they should be profaned, but also because, as St. Bernard says, "The more the realities of heaven are clothed with obscurity, the more they delight and attract, and nothing so much heightens longing as such tender refusal." "Night," says the inspirer of St. Bernard, "is the light of my pleasures."

Love is rooted deeper in the earth than any other passion; and for that cause its head, like that of the Tree Igdrasil, soars higher into heaven. The heights demand and justify the depths, as giving them substance and credibility. "That He hath ascended—what is it but because He first also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" Love "reconciles the highest with the lowest, ordering all things strongly and sweetly from end to end." St. Bernard says that

"divine love" (religion) "has its first root in the most secret of the human affections." This affection is the only key to the inner sanctuaries of that faith which declares, "Thy Maker is thy Husband;" the only clue by which searchers of the "secret of the King," in the otherwise inscrutable writings of prophet and apostle, discover, as Keble writes, "the loving hint that meets the longing guess," which looks to the future for the satisfying and abiding reality, the passage of whose momentary shadow forms the supreme glory of our mortality.

The whole of after-life depends very much upon how life's transient transfiguration in youth by love is subsequently regarded; and the greatest of all the functions of the poet is to aid in his readers the fulfilment of the cry, which is that of nature as well as religion, "Let not my heart forget the things mine eyes have seen." The greatest perversion of the poet's function is to falsify the memory of that transfiguration of the senses and to make light of its sacramental character. This character is instantly recognised by the unvitiated heart and apprehension of every youth and maiden; but it is very easily forgotten and profaned by most, unless its sanctity is upheld by priests and poets. Poets are naturally its prophets—all the more powerful because, like the prophets of old, they are wholly independent of the priests, and are often the first to discover and rebuke the lifelessness into which that order is always tending to fall. If society is to survive its apparently impending dangers, it must be mainly by guarding and increasing the purity of the sources in which society begins.



The world is finding out, as it has often done before, and more or less forgotten, that it cannot do without religion. Love is the first thing to wither under its loss. What love does in transfiguring life, that religion does in transfiguring love: as any one may see who compares one state or time with another. Love is sure to be something less than human if it is not something more ; and the so-called extravagances of the youthful heart, which always claims a character for divinity in its emotions, fall necessarily into sordid, if not shameful, reaction, if those claims are not justified to the understanding by the faith which declares man and woman to be priest and priestess to each other of relations inherent in Divinity itself, and proclaimed in the words " Let us make man in our own image " and " male and female created he them." Nothing can reconcile the intimacies of love to the higher feelings unless the parties to them are conscious—and true lovers always are—that, for the season at least, they justify the words " I have said, Ye are gods." Nuptial love bears the clearest marks of being nothing other than the rehearsal of a communion of a higher nature. " Its felicity consists in a perpetual conversion of phase from desire to sacrifice, and from sacrifice to desire, accompanied by unchangeable complaisance in the delight shining in the beauty of the beloved ; and it is agitated in all its changes by fear, without which love cannot long exist as emotion." Such a state, in proportion to its fervour, delicacy, and perfection, is ridiculous unless it is regarded as a " great sacrament." It is the inculcation of this significance which has made love between man

and woman what it is now—at least to the idea and aspirations of all good minds. It is time that the sweet doctrine should be enforced more clearly. Love being much more respected and religion much less than of old, the danger of profanation is not so great as it was when religion was revered and love despised. The most characteristic virtue of woman, or at least the most alluring of her weaknesses—her not caring for masculine truth and worth unless they woo her with a smile or a touch of some such flattery of her senses—is the prevailing vice of most men, especially in these times. This general effeminacy is the poet's great opportunity. It is his pontifical privilege to *feel* the truth; and his function is to bridge the gulf between severe verity and its natural enemy, feminine sentiment, by speech which, without any sacrifice of the former, is "simple, sensuous, and passionate." He insinuates in nerve-convincing music the truths which the mass of mankind must feel before they believe. He leads them by their affections to things above their affections, making Urania acceptable to them by her prænomen Venus. He is the apostle of the Gentiles, and conveys to them, without any flavour of cant or exclusiveness, the graces which the chosen people have too often denied or disgraced in their eyes.

## XX

### THE WEAKER VESSEL

IT is "of faith" that the woman's claim to the honour of man lies in the fact of her being the "weaker vessel." It would be of no use to prove what every Christian man and woman is bound to believe, and what is, indeed, obvious to the senses of any sane man and woman whatever. But a few words of random comment on the text may, by adding to faith knowledge, make man and woman—woman especially—more thankful than before for those conditions which constitute the chief felicity of her life and his, and which it is one of the chief triumphs of progress to render ever more and more manifest. The happiest result of the "higher education" of woman cannot fail to consist in the rendering of her weakness more and more daintily conspicuous. How much sweeter to dry the tears that flow because one cannot accede to some demonstrable fallacy in her theory of variable stars, than to kiss her into conformity as to the dinner-hour or the fitness or unfitness of such-or-such a person to be asked to a picnic! How much more dulcet the *dulcis Amarvllidis ira* when Amaryllis knows Sophocles and Hegel by heart, than when her accomplishments extend only to a moderate

proficiency in French and the pianoforte! It is a great consolation to reflect that, among all the bewildering changes to which the world is subject, the character of woman cannot be altered; and that, so long as she abstains from absolute outrages against nature—such as divided skirts, free-thinking, tricycles, and Radicalism—neither Greek, nor conic sections, nor political economy, nor cigarettes, nor athletics can ever really do other than enhance the charm of that sweet unreasonableness which humbles the gods to the dust and compels them to adore the lace below the last hem of her brocade! It is owing to this ineradicable perfection that time cannot change nor custom stale her infinite variety.

A French writer has complained that there are not more than about twenty-five species of woman. Had not his senses been Frenchified, he would have perceived that every woman is a species in herself—nay, many species. The aspects of reason are finite, but those of unreason infinite; and, so long as one woman is left in the world, no poet can want a perfectly unspoilt subject, and one which can never be fathomed. Some poet has, with much *vraisemblance*, represented Jove as creating woman in order that there might be at least one thing in the universe that should have for him the zest of unintelligibility—which nothing but weakness and unreason could supply. The human creature, however, is incapable of the absolutely incomprehensible; therefore it has been providentially devised that no man should be without some touch of womanhood, and no woman without some manhood. Were it otherwise, they would be wholly uninteresting

to one another, and could no more mix than oil and water. This reciprocal tincture of each other's sex produces that mixture of inscrutability and comprehensibility in the well-constituted and well-matched man and woman, and that endless misunderstanding, mitigated by obscure insight, which, if not the original cause of love, is the source of that perpetual agitation of the feelings which indefinitely increases love, and without which love, if it did not die, would at least go to sleep. "*Fax agitando magis ardescit.*"

Most of the failures in marriage come of the man's not having manhood enough to assert the prerogatives which it is the woman's more or less secret delight to acknowledge. She knows her place, but does not know how to keep it unless he knows it also; and many an otherwise amiable woman grows restless and irritable under the insupportable doubt as to whether she has got her master. In order to put the question to the test, she does things she knows he is bound to resist or resent, in the hope of being put down with a high hand and perhaps a bad word or two—since even the mildest corporal chastisement has gone out with the heroic days of such lovers as Siegfried and Kriemhild.

Friendship and love differ mainly in this: that, whereas the felicity of friendship consists in a mutual interchange of benefits, intellectual and otherwise, that of love is in giving on one part and receiving on the other, with a reciprocal perception of how sweet it is to the endower to endow and the receiver to receive. This relation involves, as ancient philosophers and theologians have observed, a certain opulence on the one side and a corresponding

destitution on the other—a destitution which, however, is the greatest opulence in the eyes of the former as being the necessary condition of his proper delight, which is to endow. The myth of King Cophetua and the Beggar-Maid is representative of the most perfect nuptial relationship.

All joy worth the name is in equal love between unequals; and the inmost delight of giving honour lies in its being of voluntary favour, and that of receiving it in the perception that the rendering of it is an infatuation of love on the part of the giver. Desert cares as little for honour as it is in the habit of receiving it. The vanity of a woman need not derogate from that sense of comparative nothingness which is to herself the sweetest part of the offering of her affection. Indeed, her vanity may be based upon this sense of her smallness, as knowing that this is the source of her attractiveness. A woman without the vanity which delights in her power of attracting would be by that very fact without power to attract; for she would want the power to receive that which the man delights to give—namely, that tender corroboration and consummation of her sense of her own sweetness, which every lover imagines that he of all men is alone able to confer upon her.

As to the unreason of woman, there is a positive character about it which elevate it from defect into a sort of sacred mystery. “Perhaps,” says Thomas Hardy, the greatest living authority on the subject, “in no minor point does woman astonish her helpmate more than in the strange power she possesses of believing cajoleries that she knows to be false, except,



indeed, in that of being utterly sceptical on strictures which she knows to be true." Philip van Artevelde says—with perfect truth as to the fact, but with a most erroneous implied inference—"How little flattering is a woman's love!" They understand little of love who do not see how great a part is played in it by mirth and paradox, and how the surprise of finding oneself loved the more for a kiss or a compliment makes up abundantly for the disappointment of discovering that the greatest merits or self-sacrifice do not count for much in comparison.

When the Father of Gods and men presented the newly created woman to the Council of Olympus, we know that she was greeted with peals of laughter; and to this day there is nothing that a woman of well-balanced mind hates more in a man than his taking her too much *au grand sérieux*.

It has been the practise of the Catholic Church not to define a dogma, nor to promulgate it as a necessary part of faith, until it has come to be widely denied; and that Church to which all truly sensible persons, be they Catholic or otherwise, belong, is ever careful to abstain from formulating doctrines so long as they continue to constitute portions of the implicit and active belief of mankind in general. Words tend to obscure and blunt the edge of truth, which is better felt than spoken; but when it is no longer generally felt, and is widely spoken against, then there is no help for it but to hurl anathemas against its deniers. Now it is high time that it should be plainly declared that there are few more damnable heresies than the doctrine of the equality of man and woman. It strikes



at the root of the material and spiritual prosperity and felicity of both, and vitiates the whole life of society in its source. From time to time in the world's past history, the inferiority and consequent subordination of woman have been denied by some fanatic or insignificant sect of fanatics, and the cudgels have been taken up for man by some busybody in his premature dread of the "monstrous regiment of women"; but the consensus of the world has until lately been dead against the notion. Every man Jack would have listened with a cheery laugh at the setting up of a claim of equality on the part of his dame Jill; and Aristotle, Bacon, and St. Thomas Aquinas would have regarded with silent wonder the idea of raising to an equal rank with her lord the *placens uxor* whom the Angelical Doctor declares to be "scarcely a reasonable creature." Here and there, indeed, a "poet sage" has glorified the woman in terms that, taken literally, are violently heterodox; but everybody knew what he meant in thus making a divinity of her whose very excellence consists in her being decidedly a little lower than the angels—those transmitters of the divinity of which she is only the last reflector. Lovers, also, have in all ages practised a playful idolatry; and if they are beginning now to drop the language of hyperbole, it is because they are reliable now to be believed. The ideal position of woman towards man, according to the doctrine of the Church—which, in this instance at least, is verifiable by all who have the power of psychological observation—is that of his reflection or "glory." She is the sensible glory or praise of his spiritual wisdom,

as the rising cloud of incense is that of the invisible sunshine, which, passing through the painted window, becomes manifest in all its rainbow hues only when it strikes upon the otherwise colourless vapour. The world—which sometimes fancies that it is being extremely cynical when it is only expressing emphatically some Christian and philosophical verity—expresses this fact when it says that the virtue of woman is the noblest invention of man. She has not the strength for, or indeed the knowledge of, true virtue and grace of character, unless she is helped to that knowledge and strength by the man.

“He for God only, she for God in him.”

She only really loves and desires to become what he loves and desires her to be ; and beauty, being visible or reflected goodness, can exist in woman only when and in proportion as the man is strong, good, and wise. When man becomes womanish, and ceases to be the transmitter of the heavenly light of wisdom, she is all abroad, she does not know what to do with herself, and begins to chatter or scream about her rights ; but, in this state, she has seldom understanding enough to discern that her true right is to be well governed by right reason, and, instead of pouring contempt on her degraded companion for his spiritual impotence, she tries all sorts of hopeless tricks—the most hopeless of all being that of endeavouring to become manly—in order the better to attract him who has become womanish.

To maintain that man and woman are equals in intelligent action is just as absurd as it would be to maintain

that the hand that throws a ball and the wall that casts it back are equal. The woman has an exquisite perception and power of admiring all the man can be or do. She is the "glory" of his prowess and nobility in war, statemanship, arts, invention, and manners; and she is able to fulfil this, her necessary and delightful function, just because she is herself nothing in battle, policy, poetry, discovery, or original intellectual or moral force of any kind.

The true happiness and dignity of women are to be sought, not in her exaltation to the level of man, but in a full appreciation of her inferiority and in the voluntary honour which every manly nature instinctively pays to the weaker vessel. In the infinite distance between God and man, theologians find the secret of the infinite felicity of divine love; and the incomparable happiness of love between the sexes is similarly founded upon their inequality. The playfulness which is the very dainty and "bouquet" of love, comes of the fact that in the mutual worship of lovers there is always a tacit understanding of something of a King Cophetua and Beggar-Maid relationship. No right-minded woman would care a straw for her lover's adoration if she did not know that he knew that after all he was the true divinity.

There is a mystic craving in the great to become the love-captive of the small, while the small has a corresponding thirst for the enthrallment of the great.

" 'Tis but in such captivity

The boundless heavens know what they be."

The central prophecy in the Old Testament is that

"A man shall be compassed by a woman." This wonder, which is applied by the Prophet to higher things, is also the secret of human love and its marvellous order. The infinite circumscribed by the finite, the great by the small, is the insoluble paradox which teases human affection with inexhaustible delight, as it is the thought which kindles and keeps alive the devotion of the Saint.

When this order ceases to exist, and with it the life and delight of love, it is wholly the man's fault. A woman will consent to be small only when the man is great ; but then she sets no bounds to her sweet self-humiliation, and by becoming the slave of his reason she reduces him to a like captivity to her desires. The widely extended impatience of women under the present condition of things is nothing but an unconscious protest against the diminished manliness of men. When a large proportion of our male population are thrilled with effeminate pain if an injury is done to the skin of a cat or of an Irish rebel, but feel no indignation or anguish at the violation of every sound principle and the deadening of every sentiment that ennobles life, women feel that the external conditions of true womanhood have disappeared ; and it is not to be wondered at if many of them, unclothed, as it were, of the sentiment of surrounding manhood, should, in their ignorant discomfort and despair, make as unsightly a spectacle of themselves as does the animal called a hermit-crab when, by some chance, it is ejected, bare, comfortless, and unprotected, from the shell of its adoption.

## XXI

### DIEU ET MA DAME

WOMAN is the last and lowest of all spiritual creatures; made "a little lower than the angels" to be "crowned with the glory and honour" of being the final and visible reflection of the beauty of God, which in itself no eye shall ever otherwise see; for "the beatific vision," as St. Bernard says, "is not a thing that is seen, but a substance which is sucked, as through a nipple." The Blessed Virgin, "the holiest and humblest of creatures," crowned with the glory and honour of bearing God in her womb, is the one woman in whom womanhood has been perfected, and in whom the whole of womanhood has been more or less reconstituted and glorified.

But though woman has thus been glorified by an inconceivably higher circumstance of honour than man, and has been made and declared to be not only "Regina Mundi" but "Regina Cœli," man, in the order of being, is and will for ever be above her. He, as man, seems to be, in some sort, the last of the angelic order, being not only a reflection but also a transmitter and messenger of the Divine original Fatherhood, represented to the Blessed Virgin herself in St. Joseph. Theology teaches that a characteristic of all the

angelic orders is the capacity of assuming a double aspect. They can turn their gaze directly upon God, a state which St. Thomas Aquinas describes as the "Morning Joy," or they can turn to God in his creature, which is said to be the "Evening Joy." The Father alone looks for ever downward, and the woman alone for ever upward, "her angel always beholding the face" of the original divinity; and, in whatever order an angelic substance may stand, all orders below and above are, as it were, transparent, the vision of each ending, in one direction, in the Father, and, in the other, in the Woman, that opaque surface in which the rays of Deity end, and from which they are reflected in all the multiplied splendours which they have gathered by being transmitted through the prismatic and refractive spheres that intervene. In this duplicate order, each angelic entity represents and contains the Divine Fatherhood for the entity next below, and the womanhood, its "glory" for that next above; a fact which Milton seems to have discerned, without the aid of Catholic theology, when he wrote

" Spirits at will  
Can either sex assume ;"

and which every "Bride of Christ" who is also a pure and ardent Lover discerns, when his eyes are first opened, as by a deific flash, to the feminine splendour, and he feels that "Dieu et ma Dame" is no irreverent or hyperbolic legend for his double but not divided worship. The ideal womanhood, which only one woman has realised fully, but which every woman seems to be capable of more or less representing to

some man, for at least one moment in his life, is the photosphere of God, the light and joy of the universe, "Regina Mundi," as the glory of nature, and "Regina Cœli" when she shall have become nature glorified.

Man, then, as soon as he is made by grace a participator of angelic and celestial powers, stands between God and woman, and, as he pleases and when he pleases, can take aspect as Bride to Christ or bridegroom to woman, the Priestess of the Divine Truth or Beauty to him, as he is Priest of the Divine Love or Power to her.

To render this, the central fact of life, conceivable and credible to such as have not attained to knowledge, those who know have remarked certain analogies, say rather identities of Divine and human love, of which, from reading and hearing whereof I have kept no exact notes, I will give a few examples.

The doctrine of election, which is such that it can be neither accepted nor denied by the understanding, has its lively image in "the way of a man with a maid," which, also, Solomon himself confessed that he could not understand. The man sees many maids, often of much more apparent beauty and merit than the one he chooses; and, in his choice of her, there is no compulsion. He may feel attracted by somewhat in her, but he is not in love with her, until by an act of will, he abandons his will, and assumes, by a distinct act of election, a state of mind towards her from which thenceforward he is unable to withdraw himself, whereby it becomes her manifest fault if she does not "make her election sure" by offering no such violence to love as must inevitably cause divorce.



Again, the Divine Lover, like a wise mortal lover, knows well that, however favourably the Soul may be disposed to Him, by His greatness, power, wealth, goodness, and abundant benevolence to her, He must *desire* her, and give her some sensible proof by smile, touch, or caress, which shall say to her heart, as the God of David says to the chosen, “Rex concupiscet decorem tuum.”

Again, God's strength, like man's, is perfected in weakness. When the Soul has entered upon her third and crowning stage of perfection and union, His divine weakness for her gives Him far more influence over her will than would be obtained by any display of His power and other attributes. As with a mortal lover, there is, as some one has said, an appearance of infatuation in the love of God for the elect soul. Though just and beneficent to others, He has nothing but boundless indulgence to her. “If she loves,” says St. Augustine, “she may do as she likes.” He will forgive her, almost without asking, all faults short of wilful and persistent infidelity, and, since herself she hates them, He even loves her the more for them. What ardent lover but knows that the present faults and shortcomings of the beloved are condiments and excitations of the appetite of love, impediments in the current of his passion which only render its self-willed and self-rejoicing force more sensible and triumphant? And past corruptions that are really past and no longer active are so far from hindering love that they act as manure in which the seed of Divine Love and the seed almost divine of a pure and fervid mortal affection flourish wonderfully, many a Magdalen, the just envy

of many who were always pure, having been formed into a spouse, "more innocent than any maid," by the inveterate and purifying ardour of either love.

Again, as with a mortal lover, God does not require any service of external "charity," etc., from His beloved. Indeed, He complains, as He did to Martha, of all attempts to please Him otherwise than by giving Him her society and her person in contemplation.

"All," says St. Francis of Sales, "must serve her" (the elect Soul), "but she must serve none, not even her Divine Lover, of whom she is not a servant but a spouse." He reproves in her the kind of humility which He requires of others, in whom He has not yet inspired that perfection of intention which in her He regards as attainment. He also requires in her, as a mortal lover does, that amount of "vanity," as the world calls it, which sees and rejoices in her own beauty; for it is only her knowledge of her own loveliness in His eyes which makes His love credible to her, and it is only her belief in His love which enables her to give that perfect response of feeling which is love's fruition, and causes her beauty to brighten more and more in the joy of His flatteries, making her "sweet to herself who is so sweet to Him."

Again, in either love, the one party retains a power of absolute command, which he never uses, while the other has an equal force of persuasion, of which she avails herself abundantly. She delights in calling herself his slave; he delights in being hers, and in boasting himself a "servant of servants."

A mysterious longing for corporeal and spiritual

captivity to the beloved animates either kind of love—if, indeed, they be not really one in kind. In love, the woman, who is “the body,” desires to be utterly captive to the man’s will, and he, in return, to be utterly captive to her body. His soul lives in and is moved blissfully by every turn of her head and motion of her limbs. He already is carried hither and thither in all her movements, although he is not yet *numerically* one flesh with her; but this is much more so with the Divine Lover, who actually enjoys that distinctness in identity to which the mortal lover only and for ever in vain aspires, namely, to be “man compassed by a woman,” as Isaiah says, speaking of that Incarnation which is effected more or less in each of the elect, as in Jesus Himself perfectly. These two captivities constitute one freedom, and every look and gesture of the beloved is a sacrament and a common joy. As I have said elsewhere—

“’Tis but in such captivity  
The heavens themselves know what they be.”

Another remarkable point in this divine analogy is the reciprocal desire of the great for the small and the small for the great. An ordinary man requires in his mistress abilities corresponding to his own, and he who cannot love much commonly demands from her a great power of love for him. A great man has a wilful and somewhat amused delight (“*Olli subridens*”) in binding himself in wedlock to one who, indeed, implicitly believes in his greatness, but who is really nothing but a little, ignorant Love, who gives all her mite and understands only caresses. To a great

man and to a God a little love is a great thing. As the greatest of souls is infinitely little to God, it follows that this peculiar source of felicity in extremes is, in the divine marriage, unfathomable and inexhaustible.

Another phenomenon common to both kinds of love is the longing—almost the first that arises in every true lover's bosom—to die for the sake of the beloved. "I have longed for this hour," said Our Lord. But none, save God, can die and yet live for her.

Again, between lovers, things which, under ordinary relationships, are only "counsels of perfection," become obligatory duties; the least inattention is almost a mortal offence, raising a cloud of separation which nothing but bitter penance and greater devotion than ever can dissipate; so that the spouse of God may well suspect the reality of her position, if her life, in this world, is not fuller of sorrows than of smiles, and if her failures have not rendered her perfection sensibly greater this week than it was last.

Again, in human as in divine love, "a part is greater than the whole," and either love finds its fruition in sacraments or symbols, which are parts representing the whole. Even in the presence of the beloved, the lover will choose to fix his soul upon a ribbon or a lock of hair, intensifying his apprehension of a too numerous and overwhelming beauty by thus focusing it on one point. Another of the many paradoxes common to both loves is, that they can see best in the dark. "Night is the light of my pleasures."

Again, since, in this life, the wedlock of God and the soul is, at best, only in its first stage or betrothal, its

felicities, to the soul at least, are, as with the betrothed maiden, defective, full of unintelligible and impatient desires, and daily mingled with the almost intolerable miseries of temporary separation, which seems eternal; for, while it lasts, she cannot see her own beauty, which exists for her only in the light of His countenance. When thus He withdraws from her, she becomes in her own eyes vile, unmeaning, and unlovely as the sheath of a lost sword, or the cast skin of a serpent, and it is impossible at such times to give a sensible belief to the certainty that she will, ere long, be again alive with His life and splendid with the reflection of His complacency.

Another most notable analogy of love is the revelation, completion, and explanation of herself which the lover in either case brings to the beloved. She is as the fragment of a "puzzle-picture," until she encounters the destined complement of her being, and the key to her unintelligible dreams. They then suddenly become such realities as make all other realities dreams. She dares not believe or accept the wonders of her position until she discerns that acceptance of them is imposed on her by duty and faith. Then she can no more doubt that, through all the range of her constitution, she is the blissful reciprocal of him whom she adores, than she could doubt of her own existence, which, indeed, without him, would now be no existence. In him is the only possible satisfaction of her rational, voluntary, and sensitive life, and she attains to fathomless content in the extremes of reverence for and intimacy with him.

But this is perhaps the greatest and most inscrutable

of all the mysteries common to either kind of love—there is, in its felicity, the coexistence of a celestial and exceedingly virginal pride with an insatiable appetite for its surrender and sacrifice. Theologians say that the essential of the Sacrifice of the Altar is the infinite humiliation suffered by the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in becoming flesh in the moment of transubstantiation; and has not this humiliation its analogue in the case of the Virgin when she allows her love and beauty, hitherto nothing but spiritual splendour and ethereal freedom, to become the ally and thrall of the body?

The last of the innumerable analogies, or rather identities, which I shall here notice is the indissolubility of union, when it has reached its final stage. So long as love in the soul is only in the initial state of light, or assent to and admiration of what is most excellent, the light may be quenched by other lights, less pure and bright, but nearer; when, again, the light descends into the will, this may not be able to bear the strain of a love that calls for continual fidelity of correspondence; but when it reaches the sensible affections and has been crowned in mutual and ineffable complacencies, there is no longer any practical danger of separation. The Soul feels assured that, above and apart from the great security she enjoys in the fact that all temptation has been cut up at the roots by her possession of a sensible and abiding felicity which makes all others insipid, and which enables her to say, with full sincerity, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and what on earth in comparison with Thee," her Lord also has entered into new



relations with her, and she is relieved of obligations, while He has assumed them. He wants nothing of her now which she does not delight to give; whereas He has taken on Him the marital duty of seeing that all temptation which could endanger her is kept at a distance; He is bound to cherish and comfort, and behave, not with justice, but with tender indulgence to His own flesh; and, in case of any occasional weakness of obedience on her part, to show Himself the loving Master that she loves Him to be, by *compelling* her sensitive disinclination to such external duties as may remain. He has now made her "holy" or "separate" to Himself, and "He will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption." His mercies are now "the *sure* mercies of David," and though she acknowledges that there is still a hypothetical possibility of divorce should she fall, as it is practically incredible that she now can, a possibility that causes her to "rejoice with trembling," yet, on the whole, she is "*sure* that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," shall be able to separate her from her Love.

This parallel appears to fail in one point; I mean, the extreme jealousy on the part of the Divine Lover of the Soul, when once she has entered upon this relationship to Him, and the entire absence of jealousy on her part. Sleep and accidental and external duty do not separate her from Him, but the least waking thought, feeling, word, or act, which has not Him, directly or indirectly, for its object, does. When God



makes Himself as wine to the Beloved, like the fabled Bacchus, the one thing He resents is inattention, and when she has fallen into this offence, she has to recover her favour with Him by tears and prayers. She, however, is not only content but delighted to think that there are many whom He loves as well as or better than He loves her. I attribute this fact to her instinctive perception that her beauty is unique ("there is none like her, none"), and that no other can ever be to Him what she is, though millions may be a great deal more. Moreover, by virtue of the supernatural elevation of her intellect in her intimacies with Him, she is enabled to discern that He has the power of absolutely forgetting all others when she is in His presence, and that He is, at such times, wholly hers; a concrete fact which the philosophers express in the abstract, when they affirm that "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere."

Perhaps—but I am not sure, for I do not know the mind of women or that of the Saints well enough to judge—the parallel also fails in this, that, in the higher relationship, the soul is always more or less troubled by the incredibility of so much bliss and honour, and, in the presence of the only reality of life, a reality as natural as it is spiritual, she perpetually sighs—

"Ah, me, I do not dream,  
Yet all this does some heathen fable seem!"

With these exceptions, if exceptions they be, there is, indeed, *no* vital characteristic of a perfectly ordered love in the natural sphere, which has not its likeness and full development in the Divine; nor can even the

natural perfection of love be attained without habitual reference to the spiritual. Wordsworth says :

" By grace divine,  
Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine,"

and a man can only love a woman with full felicity by understanding and obeying Christ's injunction that he should love her as He loves the Church, which every lover of God is in little, "The woman for the man," "the man by the woman," and "God all in all" in both :—for Milton's rule,

" He for God only, she for God in him,"

is not a wholly adequate statement of the relationship of man and woman, though it is as near a statement as a Socinian could be expected to arrive at. The woman is "homo" as well as the man, though one element, the male, is suppressed and quiescent in her, as the other, the female, is in him ; and thus he becomes the Priest and representative to her of the original Fatherhood, while she is made to him the Priestess and representative of that original Beauty which is "the express image and glory of the Father," each being equally, though not alike, a manifestation of the Divine to the other.

Love, with this commentary on it written in the hearts of lovers, becomes as much brighter, purer, and more ardent than the love which is without it as the electric light is brighter, purer, and more ardent than a torch of tar ; and so far is it from being true, as the foolish might imagine, that something of the natural

delight of love must be lost in this its exaltation, that everything which is truly in Nature's order gains immensely by the supernatural heat and light which illuminate and purge the exceeding obscurity of the phenomena of the uninformed natural passion.

Should any believing reader object that such thoughts as I have suggested to him imply an irreverent idea of the intimacies of God with His elect, I beg him to remember that in receiving the Blessed Sacrament with the faith which the Church demands, he affirms and *acts* a familiarity which is greater than any other that can be conceived.<sup>1</sup>

If any one perseveres in the path of perfection, these points of likeness between Divine and human love will become *res cognita et visa* ; and he will see that the phenomena of the human relationship of love are such because they are the realities of the Divine. For all properly human instincts are no other than the lineaments of God ; and man (*homo*) is an image and likeness of God, most especially in those mysteries which—let all remark well—are quite as inscrutable in their secondary, or human, as in their primary manifestation, “the surest foundation of marriage-love being,” as Hooker says, “that of which we are least able to render a reason.”

Let none who have as yet had no experience of these things, though they may have been doing their very best, despair. We must usually feed for many

<sup>1</sup> For more of these analogies the reader may consult the verses called “De Natura Deorum,” in the *Unknown Eros*.

years upon divine things before God gives us the taste of our food ; and even when we have done all, we may not find ourselves among the blessed number of those who are called to the Counsels of Perfection and the fruition of God in this life.

THE END











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